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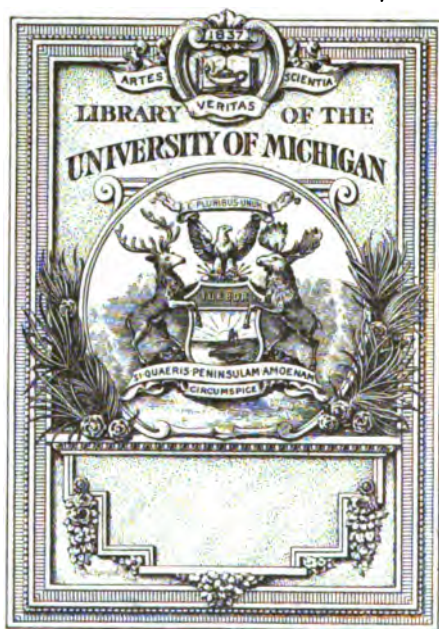
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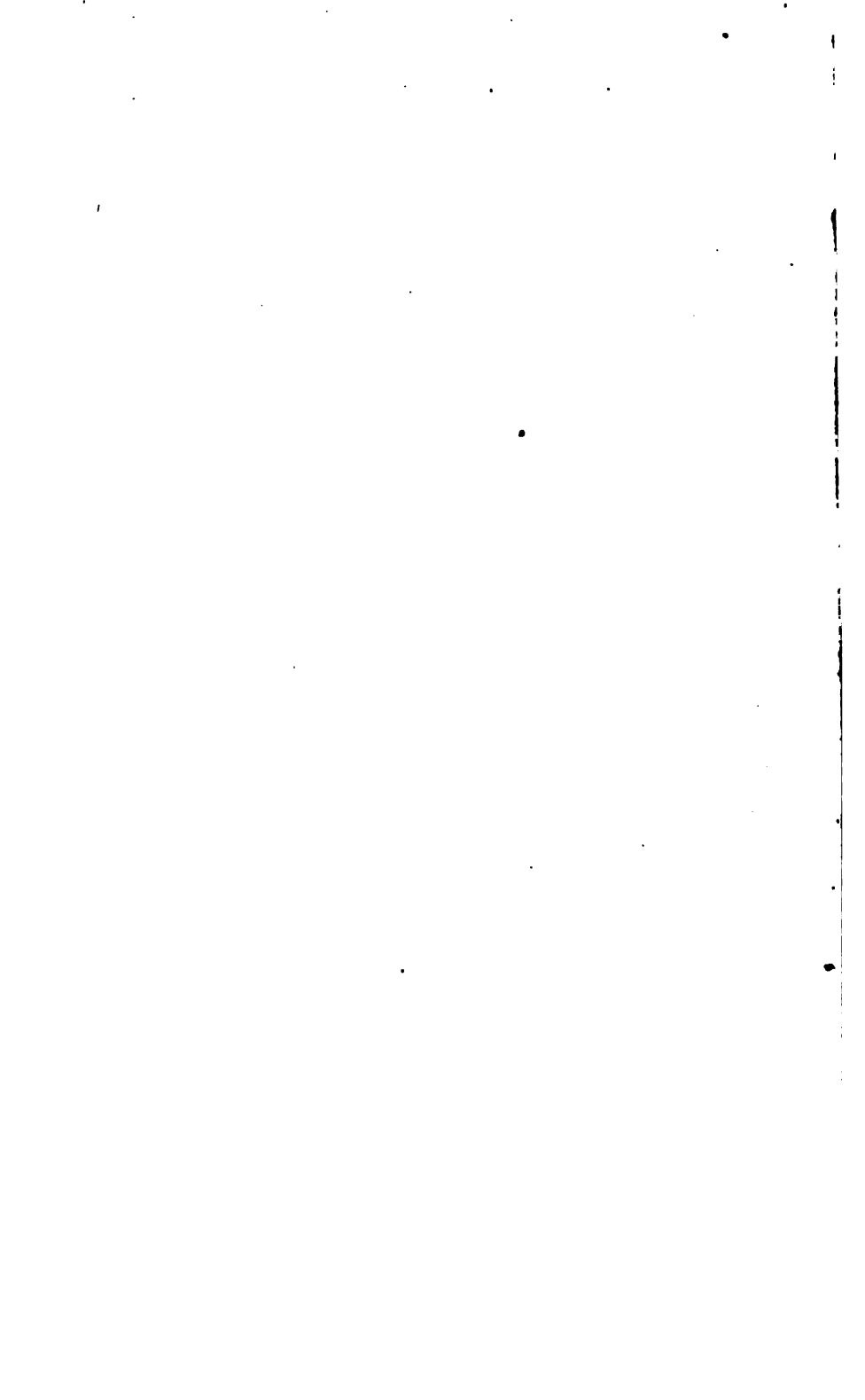
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LONDON SOCIETY.

A Monthly Magazine

OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

THE HOURS OF RELAXATION.

VOLUME LII.

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LONDON SOCIETY.

JULY, 1887.

A LIFE INTEREST.

By MRS. ALEXANDER.

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOING O'T," "AT BAY," "BY WOMAN'S WIT," ETC.

CHAPTER X.

MARJORY IN OFFICE.

LANGFORD PRIORY was not a grand place; it was a comfortable, unpretending residence, having been originally little better than a large farmhouse, to which successive occupants had added as their requirements grew. The name really belonged to some beautiful ruins which were separated from the dwelling by the grounds and a flower-garden. The situation was pleasant, sheltered behind by a wooded height; the ground sloped gently in front to an excellent trout stream, and rose again in soft swelling downs to a low range of hills which stretched to the west; while on the other side was a wide district of woodland belonging to a neighbouring nobleman.

The estate of Langford was not large. Mr. Carteret's fortune was principally derived from other sources, and he was not likely to diminish it.

Mrs. Carteret was well born as well as wealthy, and generally considered by society a very nice woman. Those who knew her more intimately were often puzzled to make up their minds whether she were a shrewd observer or a fool, a mere automaton or a woman of taste and character. She hated trouble and delighted in dress—these were her two most salient points. She spent a great deal of money on herself; but now and then she would surprise every one by an act of unexpected generosity.

That she was by no means weak in some directions none knew so well as her husband; she never quarrelled with him or interfered with him, but she went steadily her own way, and even occasionally influenced his actions. Each had a thorough contempt for the pursuits of the other; but they did not display

this too openly, and on the whole were not an unhappy couple. Perhaps the only living thing Mrs. Carteret loved was her little dog; and the only opinion she ever preferred to her own was her maid's.

The morning they left London had been lowering and damply, breathlessly hot, and after they reached the little country town of Market Gilston, their nearest station, a heavy thunderstorm came on as they drove to the Priory, deluging horses and driver. Uncle Carteret was dreadfully cross because some drops of rain made their way through the top of the closed landau; he prophesied a severe attack of rheumatism, and on arriving went into a feeble little rage because no fire had been lit in his room. In short everything went wrong. His spirit was sorely tried by the evidences of wear and tear in the furniture, carpets, &c., which he declared to be wholesale destruction, but which in truth were not worse than might have been expected, considering the house had passed through the hands of two successive tenants since the owner had seen it. Nevertheless, Mr. Carteret grumbled and lamented all dinner-time; he wished he could get rid of the confounded place altogether, &c., &c.

These disagreeables, however, made little impression on Marjory, she was enchanted with everything. The gardens, the fresh delicious green of grass and foliage, the ruins, the picturesque irregular house—all seemed delightful to a girl who had only known the streets of London and the flats of Norfolk, where she had occasionally spent a few weeks with a schoolfellow. To her the place seemed spacious and splendid and the household numerous.

The thunderstorm cleared the air, and the clouds breaking away, a glorious setting sun turned the slowly receding masses of vapour in the west into gorgeous aerial mountains and islets of crimson, violet, orange and palest lilac.

Mrs. Carteret, while her husband fussed and fumed, had taken Marjory upstairs and shown her the room prepared for her. Then she took a seat in her own apartment, to watch with keen interest the unpacking of her boxes and the arrangement of their contents in drawers and wardrobes.

Marjory, by her advice, betook herself to a similar employment, and had made her little room look quite home-like by the time dinner was announced. After, Mr. Carteret declared he was too tired to do anything; and Mrs. Carteret, neither fussed nor fatigued nor disturbed in any way, took up her tatting and settled Fairy on the sofa beside her.

"I always used to sit on this sofa when we lived here ten years ago," she said to Marjory; "but I had not learned tatting. I used to net then; and I had just had Fairy given to me—he was a little puppy."

"It is a delightful place," returned Marjory, looking round and

longing to escape out of doors. "Are you not pleased to come back?"

"I cannot say I am. It is dreadfully dull, and I have been accustomed to people coming in and talking, so that I shall like it less than I did; still, it is rather nice in summer."

"May I go out and walk round the garden, if you do not mind being left alone?" asked Marjory with some hesitation.

"Oh, yes! You may go, if you like. I dare say it is dull for you. You had better put on overshoes, the grass will be quite wet."

Like a bird escaped from a cage, Marjory flew upstairs to find her hat, and was soon wandering, with a delicious sense of enjoyment, through the garden, across the closely-shaven grass of the pleasure-grounds, and into the precincts of the ruined priory.

The entrance had fallen, only the bases of some of the clustered columns remained; while a quantity of carved stones, corbels and crockets, pieces of broken tracery and lengths of dogtooth decoration were piled at either side, partially covered with flowering creepers, cared for without being trained. A gravelled path led to where the altar once stood. Behind, the tracery of the east window was in wonderful preservation, as were also a few of the windows and part of the wall at either side of the chancel; a few lime-trees and a short sturdy oak beautified the interior, which was carpeted with soft mossy grass.

"How lovely!" said Marjory, seating herself on a rustic bench placed where the altar once stood, so as to command a fine view of the sunset. "It is just the sort of place one might read about in a novel! How sweet the wall-flowers are! Oh, how charmed Dick would be here! I should like to know all about it. If Uncle Carteret wants antiquities, I wish he would hunt up the history of this delightful old priory and let me write it out for him. What a view! It is a sort of place that makes one feel good, or at least as if you wished to be good, and that is something. Those old monks *must* have been nice! they were certainly good to the poor. How delightful life might be here, and *is*, I suppose! It is cruel to think how miserable it is in great crowded cities. Oh! I could be happy anywhere, almost anywhere, if only I had my own mother and if my father loved me! Still I suppose it is better to have no mother than one who dislikes you, as Mrs. Acland dislikes Dick. Poor Dick! I wonder what has become of him? Shall I ever see him again? I suppose, if I were in a proper frame of mind, I should be inclined to forgive Mrs. Acland—particularly here, for the place was holy—is holy! But I hate her all the same, and I never can forgive her: what is more, I shall not try! I don't think it is all because she made my home miserable and turned out both my brothers. I believe if I had met her in her best clothes at a party I should dislike and distrust her the moment I looked

in her face! Still I don't want to harm her, at least not *very* much." Then the sweetness, silence and beauty round her began to penetrate Marjory's soul, and softer pleasanter thoughts stole into her heart, including a warm sense of gratitude to Uncle and Aunt Carteret for bringing her to so charming a scene.

"I'll do the very best I can for them both," she resolved. "I wish he was not quite such a funny little man. I am afraid of laughing at him sometimes. Mrs. Carteret is very nice. I wish I could learn something of her elegant quiet manner. I know I must seem uncouth to her. I always feel in such a hurry."

The view all round was picturesque and varied—the open downs to the west, the gentle dip of the ground to the stream in front, the rich woods of Lord Beaulieu's domain rising to shelter the valley on the east. Though so near the house, the remains of the chancel wall completely hid the seat Marjory occupied from observation; indeed it was only from the entrance it could be seen.

But time was slipping away; the sun had sunk behind the downs, and Marjory remembered she ought to return. On the hall door-steps she met Brown, her uncle's valet.

"Mr. Carteret has been asking for you 'm," he said solemnly.

"I am so sorry," cried Marjory, hurrying to the drawing-room with a sudden sense of guilt.

"Where have you been?" asked Mr. Carteret peevishly. "I had no idea you were wandering about, at the risk of taking cold and incapacitating yourself for the duties you have undertaken. I must warn you that a cough is quite intolerable to me! It puts me into a fever. I cannot sit in a room with a person who coughs."

"I hope I shall not have one then," said Marjory with a sunny smile. "It is quite warm this evening; no one could take cold. And, oh! I am so grateful to you for letting me come with you to this lovely place."

Even Mr. Carteret's testiness was not proof against the joyous freshness of her pleasant youth.

"Glad you are pleased. Now, as it is a little too early to go to bed, I want to know if you play cards or any games so as to help me over an hour."

"I am afraid I only know 'Beggar my neighbour' and 'Nap.'"

"Have you any idea of chess?"

"Only just an idea; the boys used to teach me, but they said I was very stupid."

"There are chessmen somewhere; ring for Brown. Brown, get me the chessboard and men. If you attend to my instructions I will make a chess-player of you; for I have been accustomed to hold my own with the Chevalier Palligiardini and Herr Vandervoordt, the champion players of Italy and Holland."

Here Brown returned, and Mr. Carteret proceeded to set up the pieces. Then began a weary lesson for poor Marjory. The niceties of moving the king's pawn, of check and checkmate, &c., &c., were elaborately expounded till the poor child was dazed, bewildered, and overdone with fatigue, more of excitement than of travel. At last Mr. Carteret, who was greatly pleased with his own lucid explanations, exclaimed, "Why, Marjory, I do believe you are falling asleep!"

"Very naturally," said Mrs. Carteret, who had been playing patience by herself. "It is ten o'clock, and quite time to go to bed."

"Ten o'clock! I had no idea it was so late. Do you think you will remember what I have been telling you, Marjory?"

"Yes, Uncle Carteret—the beginning; but I am very tired."

"Then ring for my chocolate, and you can go to bed."

The first few days at Langford Priory were broken and unsettled. Mr. Carteret was too busy discussing various details connected with the estate to give Marjory any employment, so she drifted into Mrs. Carteret's hands. She read aloud portions of the newspapers, dawdled with her round the garden and sometimes as far as the dairy, gathered flowers to fill the vases and china bowls in the drawing-room, and wrote a few notes at her aunt's dictation. Still she had abundant time to inspect the contents of a small and comfortable library, in which she promised herself to spend many a happy hour. She mounted the library steps with almost childish glee, to examine the topmost shelves, and sat there absorbed in some quaint tome with curious streaky engravings, where the muscles of men and horses were shown in the strongest relief by the tremendous exertions they appeared to be making.

These days of happy idleness, however, were few and brief. The cases which contained what Mr. Carteret proudly called "his collection," arrived from London within the first week of their stay, and he was in a fever to open and arrange them.

"I must arrange a plan of classification at once simple and distinct, or we shall never get through the work that is before us."

"The boxes are not large," said Marjory, whose arm he had taken, to assist his steps from the dining-room.

"Ah! but if you think of the varied size of the specimens, most of them delicate and minute, you may form an idea of the number to be catalogued. On Monday—no, Tuesday—I shall open the case No 1, and begin our task. At present I am feeling very unequal to mental or physical exertion; that tendency to heart complaint, which is the result of a highly strung nervous intellect acting on an extremely delicate organization, obliges me to be very careful—unceasingly careful."

"Mrs. and Miss Waring are in the drawing-room, sir," interrupted Brown, who deigned to act as butler in the improvised establishment.

"Oh, indeed! Ah! then we must go and see them. Miss Waring is a very intelligent young lady, our neighbour here, and also an acquaintance of ours in the lovely classic land of literature and art." He turned, and still resting his hand on Marjory's arm, led her to the drawing-room. Here they found a bundle in black silk and lace, crowned by a grey bonnet, on the sofa beside Mrs. Carteret, and on a low chair in front of her sat the black-haired bright-complexioned lady to whom Marjory had been introduced on the eventful sabbath on which she had appealed to Mr. Carteret. Miss Waring greeted her with kindly cordiality and presented her to her mother. Then Mr. Carteret claimed her attention, and Marjory, much fascinated by her frank manner and pleasant smile, was content to listen, thereby gathering some knowledge of the neighbouring society.

The rector was now so old, he was obliged to have two curates. His daughters were all married, and his eldest son's widow kept house for him. Then the chief doctor at Market Gilston was dead, but his son had inherited his practice and was making a fortune. Mr. Sheldon the banker was paralyzed, and things were not so satisfactory as they used to be in that family—so far Miss Waring, with some commentaries from her auditors.

"The chief event, however, has been Lord Beaulieu's return," said Miss Waring.

"Oh! he has come back, has he? Why, it must be five or six years since the minor died and he succeeded. Where has he been all this time?"

"Oh, everywhere—sketching and yachting. He is more a Bohemian than a peer. However, he is now busy restoring and beautifying the castle, and giving employment to numbers."

"Ha! I suppose he is getting rid of the minority savings as fast as he can."

"At any rate in a better fashion than the old lord disposed of his money. Except for building, he does not seem to have any extravagant tastes."

"I hope he is doing his work in good taste! I must go over and see what he is about."

"Just now he is away, I think." A little more gossip and the visitors took leave.

A few days later and Mr. Carteret found himself at leisure to open his cases and set to work on his famous collection. This was the beginning of troubles.

The experts to whom the packing had been confided had either put wrong numbers on the boxes or disposed of the contents in a different order from that dictated by the owner. Two mornings were consumed in indignation and despair over the discovery of fresh iniquities as each package was opened, and then Mr. Carteret, armed with several lists—among which he constantly lost his way—endeavoured to ascertain if his treasures were all intact.

The confusion was great, and the irritation indescribable. "I don't see how I shall ever regulate such a chaos," cried the enraged virtuoso, throwing himself back in his seat.

"Suppose I take one of these new exercise books," said Marjory compassionately, "and write down everything as we find it, you can give me a description?"

"That would not be the slightest use," cried Uncle Carteret testily; "you see my object is to classify as I go; and now an awful idea suggests itself—I believe my gold Alexander was in this case; pray turn out that small coffer of olive wood again and shake the cotton wool. That gold Alexander was the crown of my collection; and how can I face Vere Ellis, who is coming here next week, if I have lost his gift? Why, there are scarcely any gold Alexanders in existence, and he laid me under an immense obligation by presenting me so great a treasure. It was not with the other coins."

"It is a coin, then?" asked Marjory, still sympathetic, though beginning to be dreadfully weary and bored.

"It is a coin," repeated her uncle, exasperated beyond endurance. "Great heavens! and you are supposed to have been educated. This is the way in which English women are left in outer darkness respecting the art, the genius, the—the development of antique civilization, which can alone be surmised from these precious remnants of the past! Have you thoroughly examined the contents of case No 1?"

"Yes, uncle; I am sure I have taken out everything."

"Then pray put them back again; I do not want the contents of one to be mixed with the other; when you have finished we will open No 2."

So on, through a lovely summer's day. Mrs. Carteret sent to know if Mr. Carteret or Miss Acland would come with her to visit Mrs. Waring, but a hasty message from the former that they were much too busy cut short Marjory's hopes in that direction. "When uncle has found them all and we get to the catalogue it will not be so bad," she said to herself. She was in truth sorely disappointed. She had looked forward to the unpacking of the antiquities and curiosities of which she had heard so much with the keenest interest, hoping to acquire a fund of information from so learned a mufti as her uncle, also to feast her eyes on beautiful forms. When therefore a quantity of dusty broken bits of stone, rusty iron, small begrimed imperfect statuettes, corroded bronzes, bits of coarse mosaic, a few small panels decorated with paintings of dislocated saints, some models of pillars and arches and a casket filled with copper and silver coins, she could hardly restrain her lips from the fatal exclamation, "Is this all?"

At dinner Mr. Carteret enlarged upon his loss, without attracting much attention from his wife, who was cutting up some chicken for her dog. She only observed, "You ought to have

employed Smith to pack for you. He is a far better man than Ludovici."

"Nonsense, my dear. Ludovici has a feeling for art, an appreciation for the treasures of antiquity. It was quite gratifying to see the delight he took in my little collection."

"He would *say* anything."

"Pray when did you hear from Ellis? When does he talk of coming?" asked Mr. Carteret, not caring to pursue the subject.

"I had a letter from him just before we left town. He was to arrive on the 27th, and hoped to be with us a few days after. He has been promoted, and is now first *attaché*."

"I thought he was rather young for such promotion."

"Young!" repeated Mrs. Carteret. "He must be two or three and thirty."

"Impossible! Why, his grandfather and I were at Berlin in—No—no," interrupting himself, "it must have been his father—it *was* his father. At any rate I shall be ashamed to see him now that his most kind and valuable gift has disappeared. Why, this is the 27th."

"What have you lost?"

"Why, I have been talking about it all dinner-time. My Alexander—my gold Alexander!"

"But it is not lost," said Mrs. Carteret calmly. "Do you not remember you gave it to me to keep? It is in my jewel-case."

"My dear, do you mean to make me out an idiot? I could not forget such a circumstance."

"I assure you it is in my jewel-case."

"Impossible!" gasped Mr. Carteret.

"Brown, pray tell Virginie to bring me my jewel-case."

In a few minutes Virginie appeared, bearing a large leather case. Mrs. Carteret unlocked and opened it, sought in a few of the receptacles it contained, and produced a pill-box, in which, on a bed of cotton wool, lay the missing treasure.

Mr. Carteret took and gazed at it with mixed feelings—joy at its recovery, annoyance at being proved guilty of so great a lapse of memory. "I am sure," he said peevishly, "this horrid place is beginning to dull my faculties already. I could not have believed I should forget this."

"You were so worried about those cases to-day, it is no wonder you forgot," murmured Marjory, compassionating his mortification.

"Exactly so—exactly so. I really lost my head for the moment."

Virtue sometimes has its reward. The fatigue and excitement of the day disposed Mr. Carteret to sleep after dinner. As this was an old fogey habit which he carefully concealed, he usually retired to his study or morning-room, on the plea of having important letters to write, and requested not to be disturbed until Brown brought his chocolate.

When he had executed his manœuvre, Marjory took advantage of his absence and asked her aunt if she might take a walk in the grounds.

It was very delightful to escape into the fresh perfumed air, away from the sound of Uncle Carteret's peevish voice, to enjoy the odour of a newly-mown field down by the river, to rest a while in the ruins and gaze over towards the downs, where the sun was beginning to set. How George would enjoy fishing in the stream, and Dick, too, though he was less keen about such sports. Oh! it would really be too delightful to have the boys there safe away from Mrs. Acland. She wondered when any one would write to her. She had already sent two letters home; perhaps one from George was lying there for her. She was sure Mrs. Acland would never forward it.

Then the question suggested itself, "I wonder what sort of a person this Mr. Vere Ellis is? He is rather old; I suppose he is another learned solemn man like Uncle Carteret. I wish he was younger, it would be pleasanter. I hope he plays chess! I get so dreadfully sleepy. Oh! if he were nice and would come and walk with me sometimes, it would be charming. After all, thirty-two or three is not so very old!" and she ran over in her own mind the heroes of many novels who must have been about that age, gradually forming an ideal in her imagination of a very superior highly educated gentleman, who would talk over her head, yet condescend to take some notice of her and some interest in her improvement. Perhaps he had a wife. Somehow this suggestion took a little from the interest of the picture. Miss Marjory was by nature a coquette, though she was not aware of it.

A week of rain keeping Mr. Carteret in the house, Marjory began to perceive that to reside with and to be employed by her uncle was not exactly the bed of roses it appeared to her at first. The catalogue and the bad weather united were too much for his equanimity. Marjory's mistakes, which were not so very numerous considering her inexperience and the endless alterations of plans on the part of her dictator, were bitterly rebuked and harped upon till only pride enabled her to restrain her tears and kept her from flying to her own room first and out of the house after.

But she resolved to bear almost anything rather than return defeated to the taunts and triumphs of her father's wife, who would be but too glad to point out the hopelessness of a girl who could not get on with her own mother's relations.

She thought that Mrs. Carteret sympathized with her, though that lady did not express her feelings, not being disposed to exhaust herself in words.

"Have you been crying?" she asked quietly one evening when, worn out by a series of small rages while wrestling with his catalogue, Mr. Carteret had retired to "write letters of importance."

Marjory was startled and vexed by the query, but answered honestly, "Yes, Aunt Carteret," blushing and smiling.

"If you cry because Mr. Carteret is cross, you are very foolish. The more he sees you are afraid of him the worse he is."

"I don't think I am afraid of him, I should be ashamed of being afraid of any one; but I did hope to please him, and I do not."

"You please him as much as any one ever did. He always quarrels with his *employés*; only as you are a girl and a relative, he thinks he may say and do what he likes. The next time he is very tiresome you might tell him—prettily and politely, of course—that you are sorry you cannot please him and that you would rather go home. It is very unpleasant to see people with red eyes."

"But I would rather *not* go home!" cried Marjory, alarmed at such a suggestion. "I want to stay here; I am so much happier than I ever was before, at least since I was a little child, except when Uncle Carteret is cross."

"Then you are very easily pleased," returned Mrs. Carteret not unkindly. "As to Mr. Carteret, you are silly to mind him; he would be very sorry to lose you. He is never fond of any one, but he is sometimes pleased with you, and then you cost him nothing."

"Oh, no, Aunt Carteret! he gave me beautiful dresses and quantities of things."

"He did not give them *all*."

"Then *you* did, dear aunt! How kind and good of you, when I was a stranger and no relation to you! I wish you would love me a little, and let me love you!" Marjory seized and kissed Mrs. Carteret's hand, leaving it moist from some irrepressible tears that would drop.

"You are dreadfully impulsive, Marjory," said Mrs. Carteret with a smile—a rare smile. "You must learn self-restraint or you will be at the mercy of every one who chooses to play upon you or wound you."

"I am not so easily wounded, I assure you; only people I really care for can hurt me. I am as hard as—as a stone to Mrs. Acland."

"Ah! your stepmother?" said Mrs. Carteret; and thereupon the floodgates opened and Marjory poured out her tale of woe.

Mrs. Carteret rather enjoyed listening to gossip, without exerting herself to put questions. "I did not like Mrs. Acland much," she said at length. "She is handsome, and even *distinguée* looking, but I do not think she is a gentlewoman. Who was she?"

"She was a Mrs. Cranston, the widow of an artist."

"But who was she originally, before she married?"

"Oh! I have no idea; but I thought she was very ladylike; I know she was always finding fault with me for my vulgarity."

"No, you are not vulgar," said Mrs. Carteret, after disentangling her thread, which had got into some complication. "You are unconventional, but you are a lady. You might improve yourself if you liked. You speak too suddenly; then you dart at things instead of moving gently. No well-trained person is ever in a hurry."

"I will try and be quiet. Oh! I wish I could be like you, aunt! you always seem to do and say the right thing. But if you only knew the tremendous hurry I feel in sometimes—often to reach what I want and to say what I want, you would understand how hard it is for me to be slow."

"I do not suppose I *could* understand it," returned Mrs. Carteret with an unusually indulgent smile. It was not in human nature to be indifferent to the warm sincere admiration of so bright a creature. "But I should like to see you improve; and take my advice, exercise your self-control by resisting your inclination to be wounded or frightened by Mr. Carteret. Whether you do well or ill he will complain all the same; and then you must suffer for all *his* mistakes. Most men are very weak; your father yields to his wife, for instance. I must say it is most unjust to dress you so badly; and then to send your brother to sea in a common ship—it is positively cruel!"

This was a speech of extraordinary length for Mrs. Carteret. Marjory thanked her for her counsel and promised she would do her best to follow it.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW ARRIVAL.

SOME days after this conversation came an invitation to dinner from Mrs. Waring to Mr. and Mrs. Carteret and Miss Acland.

Marjory felt quite elated at being asked to dinner, and ardently hoped Uncle Carteret would consent to go.

After luncheon, during which meal he directed his wife to accept Mrs. Waring's invitation, instead of taking a book or newspaper to a seat on the verandah as was his usual custom, he observed, "I think, Marjory, a couple more hours' work will complete the first part of our task. Then I shall rest for a day or two before I attack the other cases."

Back to the library, therefore, was Marjory marched, and set to work by her inexorable uncle. The prospect of a break in the routine of her existence was cheering, but the idea of going out to dinner was positively exhilarating, if for nothing else but for the joy of wearing the pretty half-dress evening costume her aunt had given her.

She had just glanced at the clock, and noted that only an hour

and five minutes had elapsed since she had resumed her pen, when she heard the sound of approaching wheels. It might be Miss Waring's pony carriage; if so she regretted being chained to her task. None of her aunt's other visitors interested her much.

Presently the door opposite opened, and Mrs. Carteret, looking a little more animated than usual, walked in, followed by a gentleman.

He was not tall, or did not seem tall because of his breadth of shoulder. His hair was short, wavy and dark, if not quite black. His eyes, too, were very dark and deeply set under thick eye-brows, and his clean-shaven jaw was strong but not heavy. He was not good-looking, his features were irregular, his mouth somewhat large, yet his whole style and bearing had an indescribable stamp of distinction such as Marjory had never seen before; he was well dressed and moved with tranquil assured self-possession.

"Here is Mr. Ellis," said Mrs. Carteret; "he came over from Aldenham this morning, not direct from London."

"Ah, Ralph! though I greatly object to surprises of this kind, I am really glad to see you," said Mr. Carteret, rising and pulling off his spectacles. "When did you reach England?"

"About three weeks ago. I have been greatly occupied with business and I suppose what I ought to call pleasure ever since. Glad to see you looking so well," he added.

"Well, my dear boy, I wish I were; I wish I *felt* well. This frail tenement constantly reminds me that an indifferent physique, not the flight of years, weighs me down."

"I do not think Mr. Carteret is any worse than he was when we met in Paris," observed Mrs. Carteret; "but I must go and order luncheon for you."

Mr. Ellis with a leisurely step moved to the door, opened it, and bowed in a courtly fashion as Mrs. Carteret passed out.

Returning to Mr. Carteret they exchanged a few questions and answers respecting people of whom Marjory knew nothing; then Mr. Carteret, turning suddenly to her, said, "We cannot do any more work to-day; I will not keep you."

Marjory rose immediately, put her papers and books together, and left the room, passing by Ellis. He did not open the door for her, however, or appear to know she was present, yet she felt that he had seen and observed her.

It was with a new and unpleasant sense of mortification that she sat down in the window of her bedroom to think.

Her uncle had always treated her with scant ceremony, although not unkind except when irritable, and though Mrs. Carteret's politeness was unfailing, she did not make much of her husband's young relative, yet Marjory was quite content, but now that a complete stranger came on the scene, a man too who was probably of her blood, that she should be treated as a mere *employée*, sent out of the room without a word of introduction, was too bad!

The new-comer, too, marked his sense of her social inferiority by not opening the door, as he had done for Mrs. Carteret. It was a trifle, she even laughed at her own weakness for thinking so much of such a trifle, yet she knew with the most complete conviction that had he thought she was a young lady he would have opened the door and bowed for her too.

After all, she told herself, it was contemptible folly to let herself grow morbid about such miserable minutiae, and she did rally. Finding a book, and curling herself up on a bench in an out-of-the-way corner of the grounds, she was soon absorbed in the story.

The little incident, however, left a small trail of soreness, and put her on her mettle to meet any slight with good-humoured indifference. "It is better to be here than at home," was her final reflection when dressing for dinner. "And I am sure Uncle Carteret never intends to be rude. I suppose, as I am really a nobody, he cannot help showing that he knows it sometimes; but I shall show that quiet insolent Mr. Ellis that I consider myself his equal, if I can! Three score years and ten, the Bible says, is the general length of life. Take eighteen from seventy and fifty-two remain; well, it will be hard if I do not find some pleasure, some joy, some true love in all those years, especially if I deserve it."

Dressing for dinner was a very simple affair at the Priory. Muslin, instead of cotton or woollen, a few knots of ribbon and lace, a rose and spray of fern, were the only changes required. Mr. and Mrs. Carteret had lived so long abroad they had got out of the way of making a regular evening toilet, as is the fashion in an English country house; besides, everything was at present provisional.

Marjory, however, arranged her hair most carefully, and without adding anything unusual to her ordinary attire, made the most of herself, to use an expressive phrase.

Ellis did not appear till the gong sounded for dinner, when he came just in time to lead Mrs. Carteret to table.

Mr. Carteret passed his arm through Marjory's, saying, "I am going to leave you some work to do alone to-morrow; do you think you can manage it?"

"I will try, uncle, if you will explain."

"Then you must be very attentive." Here they reached their places, and Mrs. Carteret, just before she sat down, said, "I had forgotten to explain, this young lady, Miss Acland, is Mr. Carteret's niece, or rather his grand-niece."

"Really such lengthy appellations are unmanageable in conversation," observed Mr. Carteret. Ellis bowed with an air of deference, and shot an observing glance at Marjory, who was infinitely annoyed to feel herself colour quickly when she had intended to be collected and dignified.

There was, however, no further demand on her self-possession, as no one addressed a word to her during the repast.

She was sufficiently amused, nevertheless, listening to the conversation. Uncle Carteret was voluble on many subjects, which were new to his niece, about some excavations at Rome and the discoveries made thereby; about some Etruscan vases and trinkets dug up in a village near Florence; and finally about Wagner *versus* the Italian school. She was struck by the cool superiority of the new guest, the way he threw in a word or two here and there to keep his host going and spare himself trouble. Marjory suspected that he knew a good deal more of most things than her uncle, and though he concealed it, that he felt considerably bored.

To Mrs. Carteret he was pleasantly attentive, and from the sentences they occasionally exchanged Marjory gathered that Mr. Ralph Vere Ellis had been for some years attached to the British embassy at Vienna, that he had applied for an exchange, and hoped to be appointed *attaché* at Paris.

When dinner was over the gentlemen accompanied Mrs. Carteret and Marjory, after the Continental fashion, to the drawing-room.

Then Mr. Carteret seemed to remember Marjory. He was standing in the large bay window at the end of the room, and had just proposed that they should smoke their cigarettes in the garden, when he interrupted himself to say, "Oh, come here, Marjory!" Then taking hold of her arm he led her to Ellis. "Just look at this young lady, Ralph," he exclaimed, "and tell me if you see any likeness to any one!" Ellis did not turn instantly, and the instant thus gained gave Marjory time to collect herself. When therefore the accomplished diplomatist directed his deliberate gaze upon the bright eyes, the fresh delicate face offered to his inspection, she met his glance with steady composure, keeping her eyes on his unflinchingly, till he felt he was being scanned as coolly and critically as if he were an inanimate figure. He was purposely slow in answering in order to try the remarkable *sang-froid* of this country girl.

"I am really at a loss," he said at last; "I fear I am not quick to recognize likenesses. There is a charming contadina with brown eyes in the Lichtenstein gallery by an unknown painter, that has some slight resemblance to Miss—Miss——"

"Miss Acland," put in Mr. Carteret as he paused. "Pooh, nonsense, I mean what likeness do you see to some living person?"

Ellis glanced at Mrs. Carteret, and then a light seemed to dawn upon him. "Ah! yes, of course, I am really very dense. The resemblance is to yourself."

"Exactly. I think it rather striking, and your evidence is a strong confirmation of my opinion. I wish my niece carried the resemblance a little further, and had something of my tastes and

method. She has been working under my direction at a catalogue of my collection, and we do not get on too fast."

"But that is a tremendous task for a young lady," returned Ellis carelessly.

"Come, let us have our cigarettes," said Mr. Carteret, releasing Marjory's arm; and both gentlemen left the room.

"I am glad Mr. Ellis has come. Mr. Carteret is always better tempered when he is here; and then there are several matters to be arranged which cannot be done without him; you know Langford Priory will be his after Mr. Carteret," began Mrs. Carteret as soon as Marjory brought her work and sat down beside her. "He is well bred and well informed. I am afraid he will not stay long, it is too dull for him."

"I suppose so," said Marjory.

"They say he was rather reckless and extravagant as a very young man, but he has been very steady of late years. I know Lady Mary Netterville told me Lord H——, the ambassador at Vienna, has a high opinion of him; I daresay he will be an ambassador some day himself."

"Do you really think so?" said Marjory.

"Yes; they all have to begin by being *attachés*."

After this exertion Mrs. Carteret lapsed into silence, and Marjory's busy brain occupied itself in depicting Mr. Ellis largely decorated with stars and orders, in silk stockings and the shorts of court attire, as the members of the Congress of Vienna were represented in an engraving at home, puzzling his diplomatic brethen with an inscrutable smile; she thought, "I am quite sure it is the sort of thing he is fit for. Fancy his coming out with *me* for a scramble in the woods! I might as well ask Uncle Carteret himself. Yet he has a nice voice, so soft as if he could not take the trouble of speaking fast or loud. I wonder what Mrs. Acland would say to him or he to her?" Then her thoughts naturally went off into another channel; she felt keenly that her father must have almost forgotten her existence, as he had never answered any of her letters.

The addition of a new member to the family party made but small change. Mr. Ellis bestowed a general "Good morning" on the party when he appeared in the breakfast room, and only spoke to Mrs. Carteret, allowing his host to talk uninterruptedly while he paid strict attention to what was set before him.

Soon after breakfast for the first few days Mr. Carteret drove away with his guest to the county town, and Marjory set to her work, finding she got on much more quickly alone. After luncheon she persuaded Mrs. Carteret to take a walk, and then she read aloud the "Court Journal;" so dinner-time came round, and chess and bedtime.

Mr. Ellis asked at breakfast, the third day after his arrival, if Miss Waring was at Dene Court.

"She is residing there ; but she has been away for a few days. We dine there to-morrow, and you had better come ; she will be delighted to see you," said Mr. Carteret.

"It is rather a dangerous experiment to go uninvited to a dinner ; one may make the dreaded thirteenth !"

"Oh ! we can obviate that difficulty," cried Mr. Carteret pleasantly. "Mrs. Carteret, myself and Marjory were invited ; we will not take Marjory ; so there remains the original number, and any hostess will be glad to exchange a girl for a man."

Marjory looked up with a sudden flash of indignant surprise.

"My dear sir, you are brutally frank," said Ellis laughing. "Why should Miss Acland be cheated out of the exciting festivity ?"

"Pooh ! there is nothing in a dinner-party to amuse her : she would not know what to say, and there would be no one to talk to her. If it were a dance she might like to go."

"I can write to Miss Waring," put in Mrs. Carteret, "and tell her Mr. Ellis is here ; then we can all go !"

"No ; nonsense. There is no room in the carriage for four ; I object to being crowded. Marjory must stay at home."

"And I do not wish to go now," said Marjory stoutly.

"No, of course not ; you can do a little more of the catalogue while we are away," said Mr. Carteret.

"Oh no," cried Marjory, too indignant to submit to this. "As I am not to go to the dinner you must give me a holiday."

"That is only fair," said Ellis.

"I don't like to encourage idleness," observed Mr. Carteret.

"Do you really think I am idle ?" asked Marjory, looking very straight at her uncle.

"Well—no—that is, you work very well under pressure."

Marjory made no reply ; the colour mounted to her brow and a decidedly contemptuous smile curved her lips, but she resolutely kept her eyes on her plate for a minute or two. When she raised them she encountered those of Ellis fixed on her with a curious half-smiling expression, as though studying a new specimen of human nature—an expression which had so irritating an effect upon her that Marjory was conscious of a very unladylike but strong desire to throw something at him, so strong that it warned her to draw the reins of her self-control tighter. "It will never do to show temper with such cool trained people," she thought ; and she forced herself to give Ellis a quick glance and smile, as if they understood each other, and he was laughing with, not at her.

Still it was a day of trial and mortification. She kept up gallantly till they were all gone out to dinner ; then she indulged in a fit of crying, begun in wrath and ending in sadness. Was ever any creature more alone than herself—motherless, fatherless—for was she not robbed of her father ?—friendless—for who could trust to such refrigerated beings as Mr. and Mrs. Carteret,

or look for sympathy from them? Her kind schoolfellow, with whom she had spent some happy days, was married and gone, and George was at sea. Then Dick—poor dear Dick!—basely suspected and driven away. Perhaps he had gone to the Colonies or America; perhaps he is dead—dead of hardships and a broken heart!

This was the climax of her sorrowful reflections. Eager to escape from them and from herself, she seized her hat and neckerchief and set out to visit the poultry yard, having made friends with a comely matron who presided over it.

The day after Mrs. Waring's dinner Mr. Carteret found himself very unwell after his unwonted exertions; something in the dinner or the wine had upset him, and he remained in his room all the morning. Marjory, however, kept at her accustomed task in the library until she had finished all she could do without further instructions; then she mounted the steps and took down an old translation of Froissart which had fascinated her, but which she did not like to take out of the library. Armed with one of the volumes, she sat on the top of the steps and was soon deep in the curious pictures of past times given by the old chronicler. As the door was open and the carpet soft she did not hear any one enter, nor till her attention was attracted by the rustle of paper did she look up, when to her surprise she saw Ellis writing at her uncle's table. He smiled as he folded his note, seeing she was aware of his presence, and said:

"I ought to ask pardon for having stolen in in this way, but I had begun to write before I perceived you, and then I saw you were so absorbed I thought it better not to disturb you." He rose as he spoke and, coming across the room, leant against the high steps, looking up at her with the curious half-smiling expression she disliked so much. "May I ask what you are reading?"

"Froissart," she replied, wishing that he would go away and let her escape.

"Not an ordinary book for so young a lady to choose."

"It is more interesting than most novels."

"I certainly think so. But have you forgiven me for taking your place yesterday?"

"It was not your fault," with calm impartiality.

"It was not, indeed; and I assure you you lost very little. The whole affair was insufferably dull; people living here cannot possibly have anything to say. You were desperately indignant at being left behind, were you not?" smiling softly.

"I was," said Marjory steadily. "I had a right to be indignant; it was unjust to leave me behind."

"But that is no reason why you should be angry with me."

"I am not angry with you—not the least." She shut her book, but did not like to stand up and put it away while Ellis stood at the foot of the steps.

"It must be a fearful bore to be obliged to sit here all day writing the list of that rubbish."

"It is a little tiresome. And you are not wise to call '*The Collection*,' rubbish; suppose I were to tell Uncle Carteret?"

"I am not afraid; I do not think you are treacherous."

"Do not be too sure."

"Yes, I *am* sure; I think I understand you; you have a tell-tale face."

"There is not much to tell," she returned, laughing good-humouredly. "Now please let me come down; I have idled here long enough."

"Not just yet. I have something to say you may like to hear—first, Miss Waring was *very* sorry you did not come to dinner and scolded Mr. Carteret soundly—in fact, I felt as if I were an unwelcome intruder; secondly, Miss Waring intends giving a garden party, which is to end with a dance, and you are to be especially invited."

"Really!" cried Marjory, her eyes sparkling and all ideas of enmity to the speaker and prudence as to her own words scattered to the winds. "That will be delightful! Miss Waring is a dear! What else did she say?"

"A good deal, but I cannot remember her words."

"I do hope Uncle Carteret will not prevent me from going."

"I suppose," said Ellis, moving a little more in front of the steps, "if Mr. Carteret is your uncle I am a relative—a cousin more or less removed."

"Perhaps so," returned Marjory, in no way elated. "But these sort of things are not easy to understand."

"Then you will not have me for a kinsman?"

"Well, it is not much matter. You will be going away; so shall I; and we shall probably never meet again."

"What a heartless speech!" (laughing). "I fear I have unconsciously done something to prejudice you against me."

"I never know whether you are in earnest or not. Though it is not really of any consequence—at all events, you have brought me some pleasant news. Now stand away—I must come down!" this very decidedly.

Ellis drew back.

"Are you not very immovable?" he said. "You ought to be gracious to me in this dreary land; say you will accept me as a kinsman and try to like me!"

"Try to like you?" echoed Marjory. "Would trying be any good? I always jump into liking or disliking without exactly knowing why."

"Then I trust in my case you are for once hesitating on the brink before you plunge into the fatal abyss of dislike?"

Marjory laughed merrily, then hesitated. She did not want to go up the steps to put away her book, nor would she venture to

take it with her; so turning to Ellis she gave it to him, saying, "Will you be so kind as to put that in its place for me? Uncle does not like his books taken out of the library." With a smile and a little quick bend of the head she left him looking after her with the book in his hand.

"She is uncommonly pretty and brimful of saucy spirit," he thought. "It is droll to find myself condescended to by a little school-girl, after being a spoiled child in Vienna drawing-rooms. It would be rather amusing to instruct her ignorance; she has pluck and brains, I suspect, and might turn out a leading woman; as it is, she will marry some curate or fatted calf of a farmer and be lost to social life. If I had time I should certainly cultivate her and tame her pretty daring. It is a long time since I saw anything so fresh and so amusing."

This encounter enlivened Marjory; but she was still more cheered by a visit from Mrs. and Miss Waring, when both expressed their regret that she had not come to dinner. Then the latter proposed to walk through the grounds and to the ruins, where she had not been for a long time. Marjory gladly ran to get her hat, and the two elder ladies were left to keep each other company.

They had hardly reached the ruins when Ellis joined them, and Marjory listened with interest to the talk which ensued, her eyes fixed admiringly on Miss Waring's face, quite regardless of the tact with which Ellis tried to draw her into the conversation. The topics they discussed were new to her. At length Ellis said something about going to town on Monday, and Miss Waring exclaimed, "I hope you intend to return for my party, Mr. Ellis."

"You may count on me; I am only going for a week or ten days. I want to see my chief and buy a horse. Mr. Carteret's stud is extremely limited, and if I stay over the 12th I shall want a couple of dogs."

"I did not think you would stay so long in England."

"I find it necessary. At present, you see, I am unattached, and while free I wish to guide Mr. Carteret in the way he should go. He wants a good deal of guidance, does he not?" looking at Marjory.

"Oh no," she said demurely, "he can guide every one. I am sure he takes a great deal of trouble with me!"

"Which I am sure you are delighted to give," he returned.

"Then I may expect to see you," said Miss Waring. "I intend to send out my invitations next week."

"I shall be sure to come, among other reasons, to do my duty by dancing with my cousin, Miss Acland."

"I did not know you were related."

"We are, I assure you; though Miss Acland will neither acknowledge me nor assist me in tracing the tangled threads of our kinship."

"I am surprised," said Miss Waring smiling. "I think you would be rather nice as a cousin."

Ellis raised his hat.

"I know very little about relations," cried Marjory colouring. "I never met any but Uncle Carteret—of course, except my brothers, and they are part of myself."

"How many have you?" asked Miss Waring.

"Two—George and Dick. Dick is only my half-brother." She quite forgot the existence of little Herbert.

"My mother will think I have forgotten her," said Miss Waring, rising; and they walked slowly to the house.

The few days which intervened before Ellis went to town were certainly pleasanter to Marjory, thanks to him. He looked over "The Catalogue" and praised it. He assured Uncle Carteret it was admirably planned, and advised that no further alterations should be made. He frequently spoke in a frank friendly way to Marjory, and put Mrs. Carteret in high good humour by complimenting her on the taste with which she dressed her *protégée*.

This sort of recognition on the part of so important a person as Vere Ellis gave Marjory more trust in herself; she began to have a sense of self-reliance which was new and comforting.

The evening before Ellis was to go up to town she had slipped away, as she often did, to look at the sunset and breathe the sweet evening air. She was slowly following the path to the river, when she perceived the perfume of a cigar, and a few steps further came face to face with Ellis.

"I thought I should find you here," he said, turning with her. "Tell me what fairing shall I bring you from great Vanity Fair?"

"(Oh! nothing, thank you; I really do not want anything."

"Then you stand alone among women! Have you no commission to give me? I have two or three from Miss Waring. Must I choose for you, Marjory?"

She turned and looked full at him with surprise and displeasure.

"What! may I not call you by your pretty quaint old English name?" He laughed quite good-humouredly and threw away his cigar.

"No, I would rather you did not," said Marjory quietly. "I do not call *you* by your Christian name, and it is not right that you should be more familiar than I am."

"Very well, my proud kinswoman; but I should be charmed if you would call me Ralph—my name would sound very sweet spoken by you."

"That is nonsense," said Marjory gravely. "I could not call you by your name—not if I knew you all my life; it would seem quite unnatural."

"Now it seems quite natural to *me* to call you Marjory; perhaps because I think of you as Marjory," stealing a look at her.

"Well, I do not like it," she returned unmoved.

"Very well, Miss Acland, I shall not offend." They walked on for a few paces, then Marjory said suddenly and softly, "I dare say you think me a stupid ill-tempered girl, for I believe I ought to thank you for inducing Uncle Carteret to let me finish that tiresome catalogue without further alterations. I am indeed obliged to you." She looked at him with sweet shy eyes, very unlike her usual quick distrustful glances.

"Believe me, I am very glad to be of any use to you; and I fancy that catalogue was enough to turn your hair grey, Miss Acland."

"It was indeed." A pause; then with an effort Marjory spoke: "You might help me a little more if you liked."

"How?"

"When the catalogue is quite done I am afraid my uncle may not want me—send me away."

"Great heavens! Do you wish to stay *here*?"

"Yes, very much."

"May I ask where you live when at home? In a ladies' boarding school or a nunnery?"

"I live in my father's house."

"Is it very indiscreet to ask if you are kept locked up and fed on bread and water?"

Marjory laughed frankly and shook her head, then she cast down her eyes a little sadly and said, "I have no mother, and my father is married again." Ellis looked at her very intently while her eyes were averted; he felt a sudden interest in the details of her life. "Then I am rather sorry for your father's wife," he returned, stooping to disentangle her dress from a broken branchlet which had caught in it, and speaking in a pleasant playful tone; "I think you might be rather a formidable step-daughter."

"Why? How curious! I don't think I am naturally disagreeable; but if—if I am struck on one cheek, I do *not* feel inclined to turn the other!"

"Of that I am quite certain. So you do not care to live at home? Pray tell me how I can help you to avoid it."

"Suggest something else for me to do."

"With pleasure. I would willingly keep you here if I could. What shall it be? You must assist me; though why you should imagine Mr. Carteret is ready to return you to the paternal jail I cannot understand."

"Well, you see, he never grew fond of me!"

"No? Very strange! Then I do not think Mr. Carteret's heart is of the clinging order. He is not given to entertaining devoted attachments."

Marjory laughed. "No, not exactly; and I am sure he will not let me stay unless I am of some use. Mrs. Carteret is quite different; she really likes me—at least I think she does—or I should not care so much for her."

"Ah! Do you always return love for love?"

"Yes, I am sure I do."

"A very charming disposition," said Ellis meditatively.

"Suppose," resumed Marjory, "I were to make a fresh list of the books?"

"What! have you the resolution to face another catalogue?"

"It would not be half so bad as the first one. And I love books; but as for those dusty broken curiosities——"

"Let us not be blasphemous," said Ellis. "Your suggestion is excellent. I shall act upon it; and at any rate, if you want to stay here, here you shall stay."

"Thank you very much."

"Thank *you*," returned Ellis gravely; "I consider your asking even this trifle a token of amity."

"I think it is," said Marjory. "I think I am too hasty, and I fancied when you came first——" she stopped abruptly.

"Pray finish your sentence; I am all anxiety to know what special injustice you have done me."

"I thought you cold and contemptuous; I never thought you could be good-natured, and *this* is being good-natured."

"Cold!" repeated Ellis, laughing a low peculiar laugh. "Well, conscience does not endorse your accusation; let me hope I may improve on acquaintance. What, are you going back to the house? Let us stroll a little further along the river. The evening is delicious."

"I should like it very much," she returned, "but I cannot stay. Mrs. Carteret likes the newspaper read to her about this time and will expect me; and my uncle will look for his game of chess."

"Which he shall have when I am ready," said Ellis smiling. "You will go then?" he held out his hand; "shall we swear eternal friendship first?"

"Eternal friendship! that is quite too tremendous," cried Marjory; "possible friendship if you like—there's my hand on't," she touched his quickly and was gone.

Ellis lit a fresh cigar and sauntered on, thinking idly. "Pretty wood-nymph! is it ignorance or strength that keeps her so steady and indifferent. There's something about her like the flavour of wild strawberries, their delicate fragrance, their slight piquant acidity. She is worth waking up. There's plenty of fire and tenderness beneath her outer icing. Old Carteret bristles with difficulties of another order, but I shall not leave till I have bent him to my will. What infernally good care he takes of himself; he intends to live these thirty years! How irrational it is to allow useless individuals to stand in the way of more capable men. I suppose the progress of common sense will some day develop the practice of Euthanasia."

Mr. Carteret fumed and fussed while waiting for his chess, but

Ellis was too absorbed in his own thoughts and schemes to remember his host.

Ellis was an ambitious man, strong-willed and capable of working patiently for an end. He was also capable of self-mastery if self-interest demanded it; and though gifted—or troubled—with strong passions, he rarely let the reins of government slip from his grasp. He liked his pleasures, as he liked his food and wine, to be of the very best and most perfect description. Nothing common or unclean suited his palate. In society he was perhaps more esteemed than universally popular, and although the few women he sought returned his preference with devotion, he was not generally considered a “lady’s man.”

He was by no means indifferent to women, only they were from his life things quite apart; he deliberately considered women as created by beneficent nature for the convenience and gratification of the superior animal: this is the unconscious and unavowed belief of many fairly good fellows, but with Ellis it was acknowledged and acted on with full unhesitating conviction. Still, something of character was necessary to complete a woman’s charm for him. He did not like dolls, so in general very young girls were not to his taste. But character, intellect, beauty, tenderness were only of value so far as they enhanced his enjoyment; of a woman’s right to her own individuality he had no idea. In short he took Milton’s view of the subject—“He for God only, she for God in him.”

At present he was interested and much amused with Marjory. Her untutored grace, her speaking eyes, her varying expression charmed him; her resistance to his advances, her indifference to his quiet but constant efforts to please and soothe her, nettled him. He had more serious matter for thought, however, and his schemes for the future pushed lighter and pleasanter topics from his mind.

While Ellis was away, Marjory was surprised to find how much she missed him. Indeed his absence was felt by others besides Marjory. Mr. Carteret was querulous and irritating to an intolerable degree—wanting the restraining influence of his kinsman’s presence; and Mrs. Carteret was more silent than usual.

In short every one was pleased when Ralph Ellis notified his intention of returning, and sent as his precursors a horse, a groom and two dogs.

Mr. Carteret looked not too well pleased at these additions to his establishment, but to Marjory’s amusement he uttered no audible objection.

She made acquaintance with the dogs on the morning after their arrival, and took a great fancy to one—a young brown and white setter, of playful habits and caressing manners; but the groom would not permit her to feed or pet him, explaining respectfully that “he was a young dawg, and not half educated yet.”

Finally Ellis himself made his appearance, arriving so late that Marjory had retired before he reached the Priory.

CHAPTER XII.

FOUND!

THE eagerly anticipated party at Dene Court was at hand, and Marjory's measure of content was amply filled by an invitation from Miss Waring to stay with her for a day both before and after that event, which invitation Mr. and Mrs. Carteret permitted her to accept, as neither cared to risk fatigue or late hours.

The friendly Virginie busied herself in beautifying a very simple muslin frock, making it fit for so grand an occasion; and Marjory's very vivid imagination depicted impossible glories and romantic situations at the coming festivity.

This preoccupation did not prevent her from feeling very pleased when the day after his return Ellis presented her with a beautifully bound copy of Tennyson's "*Idylls of the King*."

"As you would give no clue to your tastes, I was obliged to follow my own poor judgment," he said; "and seeing you are a lover of books——" he held out the volume.

"Oh, thank you very much. How good of you to think of me, I could like nothing better—indeed I never had anything so beautiful before. Is it not beautiful, Aunt Carteret?" cried Marjory with blushing cheeks and sparkling eyes (the presentation took place before their hostess).

"Very nice indeed; very kind of Mr. Ellis," returned Aunt Carteret.

"Do you know Tennyson?" asked Ellis.

"Very little. One of the girls at school had his early poems for a prize and let me have them to read, but she grew afraid I should spoil the binding from constantly holding it open, so she took it away. But it was not to be compared to this, and there are pictures too!" She sat down to examine them on the spot.

Mrs. Carteret smiled indulgently.

"It has evidently been a most fortunate choice," she said.

Ellis sat down on the ottoman partly behind Marjory, and looked at the illustrations over her shoulder, while Mrs. Carteret, who was going to pay some formal visits, left the room.

"You must put my name in it," said Marjory, as Ellis returned from seeing Mrs. Carteret off and resumed his place half behind her.

"I am glad I have succeeded in pleasing you for once," returned Ellis, leaning over her shoulder to see a pretty sylphlike figure of Enid.

"There, that has a look of yourself; a considerably stronger likeness than you have of Uncle Carteret."

"What, that beautiful airy creature like *me*," cried Marjory. "How the boys would laugh if they heard you. You need not say such wonderful things to 'make up.' I am quite ready to be friends without that."

"But it is like you! I say it is," repeated Ellis. "Let me see!" He seized the book as if to get a better view, and with it Marjory's hand: "Yes! the figure especially."

Marjory laughed merrily: "I am glad you think so." She turned her head as she spoke, and found her cheek almost touching his; she shrunk back. "I beg your pardon, I nearly knocked you," she said. Somehow the close proximity, the warmth of his breath on her neck, the faint fragrance of tobacco which hung about him affected her strangely, her heart beat, and an odd feeling of fear, against which she indignantly revolted, shot through her. Starting up she exclaimed, "There is no ink here; come into the library." Now in the library was Uncle Carteret, to whom an explanation must be offered. He remarked viciously that a fool and his money were soon parted, and that Marjory would probably never read the book, "or if she does will have a very hazy notion of the contents."

"I am not quite so stupid as you think, uncle," began Marjory indignantly; then a quick flash of thought suggested the folly of being angry with so perverse an old egotist—of displaying impatience before Ellis, who had followed her, and she added in a different tone, "Even if I were, I suppose talking with you and writing with you for the last six weeks ought to have brightened me up!"

"Well, it ought," growled Uncle Carteret.

Ellis seated himself at the writing-table, and as Marjory placed the book before him he looked up into her eyes and whispered, "Bravo."

"Thank you again very much," said Marjory, taking her book when he had written her name, adding "From R. V. E.," and carried it off to her own room.

A colder-hearted girl than Marjory might have been conciliated by such kindly efforts to please, and she *did* take Ellis into favour; but across this friendly mood flitted a vague helpless fear, a misty distrust, which a moment's thought dispersed, only to gather up its vapours again as soon as the dispelling force was withdrawn.

Only one day now intervened between Marjory and her delightful visit. It was mid-July; some heavy showers had relieved the air, and also created fears for the success of Miss Waring's outdoor *fête*, which depended on the weather.

Marjory, returning from the dairy, whither she had gone with a message from Mrs. Carteret, made a little *détour* through the shrubberies, to enjoy some quiet castle building and the fresh dampness of grass and foliage.

As she approached a gate which led into the woods beyond, the

howls of a dog as if in pain and fear startled her. She paused and then ran quickly through the gate in the direction of the sound. Turning round a large tree into the wet grass, she beheld her favourite setter crouching on the ground, held firmly by Ellis with one hand, while with the other he beat the animal severely with his dog-whip. His expression was coldly composed, not the smallest tinge of anger to excuse the severity of the punishment.

"Why do you beat that poor dog?" she exclaimed.

"Because," returned Ellis deliberately, after administering a few final lashes and then letting the dog go,—"because he must be taught obedience; he must learn to keep at heel when told."

"I am sure you are naturally cruel! It was not necessary to hurt him so much. Could you not teach him by kindness?"

"Not half so effectually as by cruelty! I am not cruel, but if it is necessary to be cruel, why, it's folly to mince matters."

"You looked as if you liked it," cried Marjory contemptuously and flaming with indignation. Ellis laughed.

"You don't understand, my dear Miss Acland. A dog must be licked into shape, any one will tell you the same thing. You will find Tatters quite ready to make friends with me in a minute or two. Which way are you going?" and he turned with her towards the house.

Marjory could not speak; she feared showing too much indignation.

"Confess now you would like to thrash me within an inch of my life?" said Ellis smiling.

"Yes! I should very, very much," returned Marjory quickly, with such unmistakable sincerity that Ellis could not restrain a laugh. He offered her the whip, saying, "I will take whatever punishment you choose to inflict, *provided* you give me my revenge after!" Their eyes met as he said this, and again a wild sense of fear, for which she despised herself the next instant, thrilled through her. Was she growing a senseless coward?

"You do not accept my offer?" he continued as she did not speak. "Come, I don't like you to think me a monster! I assure you I am not—I am no worse than other men if not much better. As to the dog, he is none the worse. Here, Tatters, Tatters!" The dog came timidly and fawned upon him: "You see."

"Yes," returned Marjory, who felt disgracefully inclined to cry from a curious mixture of feeling, "I see, and I feel ashamed of so poor-spirited a creature! he ought to have bitten you! Perhaps you would not have beaten him so hard had you not known he would have been ready to fawn on you."

"You are a very dangerous young lady! It would be no trifle to offend *you*. It is not easy to mollify you, as I know."

"I really do believe you are naturally cruel. I felt it the moment I looked at you, and I would rather walk alone—I would indeed."

"Why, Marjory? I mean Miss Acland."

"Oh! I daresay I am foolish and prejudiced, perhaps rude, but I am *not* angry—not now; you have made me feel quite miserable. I do not think either George or Dick would have beaten a dog as you did, not just in the same way."

"I am very unfortunate!" cried Ellis, half in earnest. "Now I suppose you will not 'make up,' as you call it, for ages, and I am going away to Beaulieu to-morrow; we shall not meet again till Miss Waring's party. Will you not shake hands?"

"Nonsense, Mr. Ellis! What can you care about it? I cannot shake hands with you! Good-bye; do not kill your poor dog before we meet again." She opened the gate as she spoke and ran swiftly down the shrubbery towards the house.

Ellis stood looking after her half amused, half vexed. "What a provoking, sensitive, obstinate girl! But she is less indifferent than she was. Yes, dislike is a better beginning than indifference. She was almost in tears. I wonder why?"

* * * * *

Marjory was very quiet and undemonstrative for the whole of the evening and kept close to her aunt, but when not reading aloud to that lady perused the copy of Tennyson Ellis had given her. Ellis himself talked a good deal about foreign politics to Mr. Carteret, who had driven over to Market Gilston that day and had consequently to write "letters of importance" in the privacy of his own study. So Ellis went out to smoke, and Marjory saw no more of him, except for a few minutes at breakfast next morning, until they met at Dene Court.

Lord Beaulieu, whose guest Ellis was to be for the next few days, had, as was said before, succeeded his nephew, a sickly lad, who died a few years before when only eighteen, and so permitted the revenues of the estate to accumulate largely.

The present lord had led an easy artistic life as an impecunious younger brother, chiefly in Italy and the south of France. He was rather bored than elated when the death of his predecessor raised him to rank and riches. Nevertheless he proceeded to enjoy himself as much in his old way as his altered circumstances permitted.

The old castle at Beaulieu had been kept up after a fashion, that is, it had not been permitted to fall into decay; but what repairs were needful had been done with a niggardly hand and with utter disregard of the fitness of things. Lord Beaulieu therefore decided on complete restoration in harmony with original design. This was begun and carried out so thoroughly that at the time of which we write there were not more than four or five rooms left habitable in the edifice. Here Lord Beaulieu dwelt contentedly, conferring with the architect, the clerk of the works, and an artist whom he had known abroad and whom he had brought with him after a short visit to Paris, from which place

he had just returned. To this gentleman was confided the interior decorations; but the architect and director in chief was Lord Beaulieu himself. Here among stones, bricks, dust, mortar and workmen Lord Beaulieu was happy.

Ellis had been known to him in Italy; and he was very glad to renew his acquaintance with the accomplished *attaché* whose opinion in artistic matters he considered sound. The time passed agreeably, examining the works, discussing the plans, and fishing. The two men had plenty to talk about, and there was just that difference in their tastes and knowledge which gave zest to conversation.

The days, then, before the Dene Court party passed swiftly. But, alas! the day itself broke in storm and rain; nor did the weather improve as the hours rolled on.

In view of the uncertainty of the weather the invitations requested that, if the weather proved unpropitious for a garden party, the guests were requested to assemble later for a dance and supper. Lord Beaulieu, though not much disposed for such festivities, was too kindly a neighbour not to show himself at Mrs. Waring's house. He too had known her and her daughter abroad when he was a Bohemian artist not too well off, and he had always been an ally of Miss Waring.

The dance was in full swing when Ellis and his host arrived. Dances in Gilston and its vicinity were few and far between, and the local *belles* and *beaux* eagerly seized the opportunity offered.

Dene Court was a fine house of the Queen Anne period, with a large inner hall, which was used as an impromptu ball-room, a gallery at the back affording a convenient place for the musicians. It was well lighted, plentifully decorated with flowers and, with the moving crowd of many-coloured dancers, made an effective picture.

Miss Waring received her guests in the drawing-room, where Mrs. Waring, who took little or no part in the entertainment, was comfortably established on a sofa, where her special friends came to speak with her.

"I suppose I need not offer to introduce you to partners?" said Miss Waring after some little conversation with the last arrivals.

"No, thank you; I am no dancer," said Lord Beaulieu.

"Well I am. It is part of an *attaché's* duty," added Ellis; "but as every one seems afoot I shall look on for the present."

"It is quite a country assemblage," said Miss Waring; "none of our London-going neighbours have returned yet."

Other guests claiming her attention, Ellis and Lord Beaulieu strolled back to the hall, where the former soon perceived Marjory, who was going through the lancers under the guidance of a very boyish-looking young man with a fair open face. She was looking her best. Pleasure and excitement had given her a rich colour, which heightened the brilliancy of her eyes; her abundant chestnut brown hair formed a sufficient coiffure; her simple frock of

creamy muslin was gracefully draped ; the open corsage, with its modest cascade of lace, had for its only ornament a spray of crimson roses, their dark green leaves lying against her soft white skin.

It was some time before she recognized Ellis, for she was evidently on the best possible terms with her partner. They laughed and talked and made endless mistakes in the figures of the dance ; but Ellis watched with a degree of pleasure that surprised himself the natural grace of her movements. "I think I may venture to waltz with her," he thought ; "she ought to make an admirable dancer."

The lancers over, the performers slowly filed past to the refreshment and other rooms, and presently Marjory and her partner came up.

"I think you intended to cut me !" said Ellis smiling as he held out his hand ; "but I will not submit to such treatment."

"No, indeed I did not !" giving hers ; "I saw you just now, and was looking round for you."

There was such an unusual expression of soft happiness in her eyes, of kindness in her tone, that Ellis asked himself with a curious sense of irritation, "Is this cub some boyish lover who has unexpectedly turned up ?"

"I need not ask if you are enjoying this gay and festive scene ?"

"It is perfectly delightful !" cried Marjory, with emphasis on "perfectly." "Do you know, I have danced everything !"

"I quite believe it," with a grave bow. "Pray can you spare me a waltz ?"

"I am not sure," taking her programme from her waistband and consulting it seriously.

"The next is a polka, and you have promised it to me !" cried her partner, looking over the card.

"Yes, I know ; and then there is a waltz. I am engaged to some one, I cannot make out the name."

"Persons who do not write legibly do not count ; put my name in his place."

"Oh no, I could not do that !"

"I know who it was, Miss Acland," cried the cub. "It was that old grey buffer Miss Waring introduced to you. He is a stranger. I know all the men about here ; he's not one of them."

"Then the dance after," urged Ellis, taking the programme.

"I am afraid I do not waltz well enough for you," said Marjory, smiling upon him.

"Allow me to find that out for myself," said Ellis, putting his initials against one of the few unappropriated dances.

"If you don't come along, Miss Acland, you'll have no time for an ice before the polka begins."

"That would never do," exclaimed Marjory, yielding to the onward movement of her partner, but turning her head as she went to throw a bright arch glance at Ellis.

"That is a deucedly pretty girl," exclaimed Lord Beaulieu, who stood behind him. "Who is she? a stranger? I do not know her face."

"She is related to old Carteret, his niece or grand-niece, and is staying at the Priory."

"She would make an admirable model. What an expressive face! I should like to sketch her."

"She is a mere school-girl," said Ellis carelessly, and he went away to talk with Miss Waring.

At last his turn came, and Ellis smiled to himself when he remembered the last dance at which he had figured, the urbane highly trained fascinating women of the world whose cavalier he had been. Nevertheless he was conscious of a certain keen sense of pleasure in the prospect of a waltz with simple untutored Marjory Acland, mere school-girl though she was.

"This is a quadrille," said he as he offered her his arm; "you cannot want to dance it. You ought to rest, and then give me the waltz which follows."

"Very well; I am a little tired."

"There is a boudoir or some such place hereabouts, where we can be quiet," he said; "this place is insufferably hot." He led her to a small drawing-room opening upon a balcony.

The night had cleared, the clouds rolled away, and a fine moon was shining over the woods and fields visible from the windows.

"It is better here, is it not?" asked Ellis.

"Yes, for a little while. It is so cool and dim," said Marjory, sinking on a sofa and feeling she needed the refreshment of a brief rest.

"So you have been having such a good time, as the Americans say, that you extend plenary absolution even to so great a malefactor as myself?"

"Yes; at present I cannot feel vexed with any one."

"Something especially pleasant has happened to produce so much sunshine; I read it in your eyes—your smile?"

"You are right; something very delightful has happened, though I am a little uneasy. I had a letter from my brother this morning. He is safe in London and wants to come and see me!"

"Oh, indeed! Which of your brothers?"

"George."

"How long has he been away?"

"A year and three months. He is not to be long in England, and I *do* want to see him so much."

"Well, can he not come down to the Priory?"

"I daresay he has money enough for his railway fare, but—but I am afraid Uncle Carteret would not like him to come."

"Why should he object?"

"I do not know. He would not be pleased, perhaps, if I asked leave for him to come, yet he will never think of inviting him if it is not put into his head."

"I see," gravely. "It is a difficult question, and requires diplomatic handling. I fancy you require my help?"

Marjory hesitated, drew off her glove nervously, and then with a little embarrassed laugh said, "Yes, I know you could help me, but I am half ashamed to—to ask you, because I have been—been rather rude to you, and what is worse, I don't feel particularly sorry for it."

"That is a great aggravation undoubtedly," returned Ellis gravely. "And you have been dreadfully rude, you know."

"No, not dreadfully."

"Will you answer me one question candidly?—I promise not to be offended by any explanation: Why do you dislike me?"

"I don't know," dropped from Marjory's lips before she could stop the words. "That is," blushing vividly, "I do not dislike you, I am sure I do not, exactly——"

"There, that is quite enough! I am very thankful you do *not* know why you dislike me. There is some hope that a prejudice so unfounded may melt away in time."

"You see," said Marjory looking straight at him and recovering her self-possession, "I do not quite understand you, I don't feel sure. And, oh! do not let us talk of disagreeable things on this delightful evening; I think you have been quite kind, and I was beginning to think I should like you, only—that dog."

"But, Marjory, that is utter folly."

"Very well, perhaps so."

"Then you will not ask my help?"

"No; but if you choose to give it I shall be grateful."

"Very good. And we are to be friends?"

"Yes, if you care to be friends with me."

"Well, it is a curious fact, but I *do* care. Come, they are playing a capital waltz, it was a great favourite in Vienna. Where did you learn to dance?" and he led her towards the hall.

"Some of my school-fellows taught me. They had a French lady to teach them, but I was never allowed to have extra lessons, that is why I am so ignorant and——"

"Look on this picture!" interrupted Ellis, pausing before a long glass and pointing to her reflection in it. "Do you think profound knowledge or high accomplishments are very essential to so charming a personage?"

Marjory withdrew her arm from his, annoyed at what she considered a piece of impertinence. "I want something *in* my head for my own sake," she said. "And you are ever so much nicer when you are not sarcastic."

"Sarcastic! I protest you do me the greatest injustice. I am wholly and sincerely in earnest! Did none of your other partners convey to you their conviction that you are the *belle* of the evening? not even the pretty boy who carried you off for the polka?"

"The pretty boy!" laughing, partly mollified yet still dis-

trustful. "He is a naval officer; he is delightful! I like him so much. No, he did not talk nonsense."

"It must be trying to exchange him for an idiot like me."

Marjory laughed again very merrily. "He is staying here," she said; "he is the rector's youngest son, and he says he will come and see me, but I told him he must not."

"What audacity!" exclaimed Ellis. "We shall lose that waltz if you delay longer."

When this was over a country dance was proposed.

"A country dance!" exclaimed Ellis. "You would not think of such a violent performance; it requires muscles of iron, staying power of the highest order. No, you had better come back to that pleasant nook we discovered, and let us discuss our plans about your brother."

"Very well," said Marjory with some reluctance; and they returned to the dimly-lighted room which Ellis found so much to his taste. It was no longer empty, however, as many couples were sitting and standing about.

"What have you done with your other brother—what is his name?" asked Ellis as they paused beside a window through which the moonlit grounds were visible.

"Dick? Ah, I do not know what has become of Dick," sadly. "He quarrelled with his mother and went away more than a year ago; we have never heard of him since."

"Then I am afraid he is the scamp of the family."

"Indeed, indeed, he is not! He is so quiet and steady, and everything that is good."

"What a dangerous character! Still waters run deep."

"Oh! of course you laugh at me; but if you knew Dick!"

"I should endorse your opinion? Perhaps. Meantime you had better sit down and rest, while our *convives* are prancing." He pointed to a lounge which stood invitingly near. The sound of a brisk air summoned the loiterers who had been hanging about, and Ellis had begun a sentence when to his great disgust the young naval officer came quickly into the room, looking eagerly round as if in search of some one. "Ah! there you are, Miss Acland," he exclaimed; "I have been looking everywhere for you; they are just going to have a jolly country dance—I think you promised it to me."

"I do not think I could, for I did not know we were to have a country dance."

"Well, I am sure my name is down for No. 13. May I see your card? Aye, there it is, only they have changed it to a country-dance. Come along, our *vis-à-vis* are waiting."

"Miss Acland is very tired and intended to rest, I believe," said Ellis blandly.

"I feel rested already, and the music sounds delightful," cried the faithless Marjory, rising and accepting the arm offered her,

with a pretty deprecating look to Ellis, and went off cheerfully with the interloper.

"Deserted, by Jove!" thought the former, with an impatient frown, which was almost immediately succeeded by a smile. "I thought I was beginning to make some way; and I believe she is just as well pleased with that insignificant sailor boy as with my noble and experienced self. She is the first woman I ever met who seems to have an innate distrust of me."

* * * * *

It was all over at last. But when Marjory shut to the door of her own room, she did not begin to undress. She lit the candles which were attached to a large cheval glass and looked at herself very deliberately; then a well pleased smile parted her lips and a tangled succession of thoughts stirred her brain. First came a comfortable conviction that she did not look so badly; next, that she had danced everything, and four times with that nice young sailor; finally, that Mr. Ellis had danced with her, and only with her! moreover that he was really, truly, genuinely vexed when her favourite partner had carried her off. That was a triumph! If so cool and indifferent an individual, a man of the world, the great world, a future ambassador, took the trouble of talking to her insignificant self, he must think her rather nice, for she could not credit him with abstract good nature. The remembrance so exhilarated her that she performed a *pas seul* before the mirror and laughed aloud merrily, while she blushed at her own folly. "It would be such fun if he were to take a fancy to me (of course it would only be a passing fancy) and to show him that although he is a great man (comparatively) and I am a mere nobody I do not and will not care a straw about him! I must be very nice, though, when I go back, if he gets an invitation for George. Oh! how delightful it will be to see George. Dear George! I wonder if he will be able to find out anything about Dick." She stood a moment or two, her face softened and sobered, then she undressed quickly, blew out the candles and went to bed.

Next day, however, inexorable fate overtook Marjory in the shape of Aunt Carteret, who had been despatched to recall her. Mr. Carteret had decided on making a new alphabetical list of his books, and he was determined to begin the very next day. So Marjory could no longer be excused.

Ellis also returned in time for dinner, and before going to table contrived to give Marjory a hint that it would be well to broach the question of George's visit at once. This she did with some trepidation. Her announcement that her brother had come home from sea did not arouse much attention from Mr. Carteret. But Ellis took up the running.

"Your brother has come home, do you say, Miss Acland?" he said audibly. "I suppose you want to run up to town to see him?"

"I want to see him very much indeed," faltered Marjory.

"How—what?" cried Mr. Carteret. "Go to town. Certainly not. Why, we begin the catalogue of books to-morrow, and it would be very bad behaviour on your part, Marjory, if you were to absent yourself now that I have taught you to be a little useful."

"I do not want to go away, uncle, but I do want to see my brother."

"Then he had better come down here," suggested Ellis.

This proposition seemed to startle Uncle Carteret; but as Ellis appeared to think it a matter of course and Mrs. Carteret made no objection, he gave a peevish assent.

"George need not be in the way at all, uncle," said Marjory, eagerly. "He can ramble about the place in the morning and walk with me when I have done writing, and only for a couple of days, you know." The ladies were leaving the dining-room as she spoke, and Ellis shook his head at her. Later, when he found an opportunity, he lectured Marjory on her imprudence. "Such a speech is always unwise. It gives a man like old Carteret an exaggerated idea of his own benevolence. Take such things as natural and of course, as if it was or ought to be a pleasure to him to invite any relative of yours."

"But it is not," cried Marjory.

"No matter; you can credit him with proper sentiments. Now have I not returned good for evil? Have I not kept my word in spite of your base desertion of me last night?"

"You know you did not want to dance the country dance."

"Did you?"

"Yes; I never was at a party before."

"You ought to have preferred sitting out with me."

"Why should I?" asked Marjory, opening her innocent-looking eyes.

"Oh, because—because I wished it."

"That is no reason in my opinion. There, Uncle Carteret is putting out the chess-men."

"Ah," Ellis advanced to his host, "I fear I must trouble Miss Acland to take my place, sir," he said. "I have some important letters to write, and must send my man over to Market Gilston with them. Have you anything for the night mail?" Marjory gave him a reproachful glance. "Lord Beaulieu desired me to say he wished you would drive over and look at the alterations and restorations he is making. He would like the opinion of such a judge as he knows you to be."

"Ah, indeed, I am sure his lordship is very welcome to any advice I can give him. I daresay there is much to amend in the plans. I am told he employs none but Englishmen. If to-morrow is fine we will drive over to Beaulieu."

"To-morrow" was fine. They started, therefore, immediately after luncheon; and Marjory found the scenery, the air, the perfume of the new-mown grass—everything, in short, delightful.

In her heart she conjectured what the answer to the invitation would be. It was more than probable that Mrs. Acland might be propitious, as she seemed anxious to stand well with the Carterets. Once or twice when roused from her thoughts, Marjory had caught Ellis's eyes, as if he had been contemplating her, and she had given him a friendly grateful glance and smile, remembering the good service he had done her.

Mr. Carteret discoursed on Gothic *versus* Classic style, and proved to his own satisfaction that the former was distinctly barbarous.

Arrived at the park gates, the gentlemen alighted, and then Ellis, as if moved by some sudden thought, asked Mrs. Carteret, who was going on to pay a visit, "Do you want Miss Acland very much? If not, she may like to see Beaulieu."

"Oh yes, she can go if she likes."

"Thank you. I should greatly like to go."

"Hey—what?" said Uncle Carteret. "You can carry my sketch-book and case of pencils then."

Ellis led them across the park, under the stately oaks and graceful beech trees, which grew singly or in clumps, through which they caught glimpses of the deer browsing in groups.

"Give me your arm, Marjory," said Mr. Carteret. "I had no idea it was so far, Ralph, and it is extremely hot."

"We will get round to the east end directly and find shade," returned Ellis.

"Ah, there is the castle!" cried Marjory. "How fine it looks, rising above the trees."

"It will be very fine when finished. They are busy about the chapel now; it had quite fallen into decay."

In a few minutes they ascended a smooth green bank, and following the edge of what had been the moat, now a sunken shrubbery, turned an angle and found themselves in a busy scene.

Workmen were sawing stones, chipping stones, laying courses of stones with ringing trowels. Heaps of mortar lay about, some being mixed, others ready. Men were climbing ladders, putting up scaffolding.

"I do not see Beaulieu about," said Ellis. "I will look for him; he would not like to miss you."

As he turned to go, he was struck by Marjory's startled expression and heightened colour.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Look," she exclaimed excitedly, "do you see that man who is standing by a heap of mortar there?"

"Yes, a tall good-looking young fellow."

"It is—it is Dick!" cried Marjory, dropping pencils and sketch-book recklessly and darting forward to clasp his mortar-splashed, dust-begrimmed hands. "Oh, Dick, have you forgotten me? I am so glad! I thought I should never see you again."

(To be continued.)

COUNT TOLSTOI'S "MEMORIES."

PERHAPS the most remarkable event in the annals of recent romance has been the sudden growth of interest in Muscovite fiction. Ten years ago Tourguénief was already accessible through the medium of good French and indifferent English translations, and was admitted by the *Athenæum* to occupy the foremost rank amongst contemporary novelists. His occasional visits to these shores, coupled with his wonderful personal charm and noble appearance, helped also to spread his well-earned fame. But at that epoch the readers of Tolstoi might have been counted by tens, and of Dostoieffsky probably on the fingers of one hand. At the hour we write there are no books more actively canvassed amongst intelligent readers than the masterpieces of the two authors we have just named. "Anna Karénine" is seen on the drawing-room table of every second house we enter, and if it is not actually *en évidence*, is pretty sure to be discussed should the subject of new books crop up. Fewer readers have had the perseverance to tackle "War and Peace," but the numerical proportion of the readers of these two books admirably illustrates the proverbial remark about the wisdom of the majority. Others again are champions *à l'outrance* of the claims of Dostoieffsky and go so far as to declare that of the three great Russian writers named he is the best suited to achieve popularity with English readers. To such a view we are obliged to demur, holding for several reasons that neither Tolstoi nor Dostoieffsky are ever destined to become even as popular as Tourguénief. The last-named writer is by far the most cosmopolitan of the three as he is the most finished artist. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of the life depicted in the pages of Tolstoi, and still more so in those of Dostoieffsky is calculated to disconcert and dismay the average reader. There is a certain limit beyond which the principle *omne ignotum pro magnifico* fails in its operation. Again, the length of Tolstoi's books is a serious obstacle in the way of popularity. Many persons, especially women, are frank enough to confess themselves bored to extinction by the excessive minuteness of his descriptions, and hopelessly confused by the peculiarities of Russian nomenclature. On the other hand it is impossible to deny that recent Russian fiction has already exerted, and is destined to exert, a powerful influence upon native workers in that field. If a *plébiscite* of literary men were to be taken as

to their favourite novelist, Tourguénief would be a most formidable candidate for first honours. Nor is this to be wondered at, if we take into account some of his claims for consideration. His writings are full, perhaps over full, of the charm of melancholy, which finds its most perfect expression in "Une Nichée de Gentilshommes," and this generation undoubtedly numbers more votaries of "Il Pensieroso" than "L'Allegro." He has moreover an unrivalled sympathy for the mysterious aspects of nature, and a corresponding mastery in dealing with the element of the supernatural. To psychologists he is specially interesting as affording the most remarkable instance of the connection between the creative and dreaming imagination, for Tourguénief was a great dreamer. Lastly, he is essentially the musician's novelist, for no man of letters has ever treated that much-abused art with more exquisite sympathy. And yet in spite of all these remarkable qualities and many others less easy to define, we find ourselves, for the present at least, wavering in our allegiance to Tourguénief, beneath the spell of his great rival and friend Tolstoi "ce prodigieux Tolstoi, qui terrasse mon imagination et enchaîne mon jugement."*

One of the most brilliant of recent recruits in the ranks of the great army of English writers of fiction, Mr. Rider Haggard, to whom in common with thousands of others we owe "the swift passage of many happy hours," has advanced an eloquent plea in a paper in the *Contemporary Review* in favour of greater liberty being accorded to English novelists in treating the broad questions of humanity. Unless they are emancipated from the trammels which a deference for the feelings of the Young Person has imposed upon them, he thinks we shall be landed in a wholesale revolt to Zolaism, which he pronounces an accursed thing. Now while we are entirely in accord with Mr. Haggard in his estimate of Zolaism, we think that the French, by the interest they have shown in Russian fiction in the form of translations, studies, &c., and in which they have been quite ten years ahead of us, have probably furnished us with the most effective antidote to the poison which has begun to filter from their fiction into our own. No writer, short of an adherent of Zola, can crave greater liberty than that enjoyed by Tolstoi in the pages of "War and Peace," and yet we believe there is nothing in that book from which a healthy-minded young person could take hurt. We confess that we could well wish that Tolstoi had not written "Anna Karénine," for he has shown in "War and Peace," and again in his "Memories," that it is possible to give as realistic a picture of manhood and womanhood as any one can wish to have, without being either disgusting or dreary.

Begun in 1851 and laid aside in 1857, these "Memories" remain a fragment. It would seem as though the writer had

* M. de Vogüé in his Preface to Tourguénief's "Œuvres Dernières."

grown a little weary of the task, and the feeling of irksomeness which he ascribes to the narrator in dealing with certain passages in his life may have faithfully reflected his own state of mind, and lends weight to the assertion which his various biographers have put forward to the effect that in these *notes intimes*, as M. de Vogüé calls them, Tolstoi has revealed the growth of his own character, and that the hero, Nicolas Irteneff, is none other than Tolstoi himself. For our own part we should prefer, if possible, to regard the autobiography as largely imaginary, holding, as we do, that the complete turning of oneself inside out, which such a process otherwise involves, has in it a certain degradation, which would greatly impair the enjoyment of perusal, while it destroys the principle of impersonality, the observance of which generally varies in a direct ratio with the artistic merit of such a work. It remains to be noticed, as we gather from M. Arvède Barine, the author of one of the two French translations of the "Memories," that when Tolstoi made up his mind to publish these fragments, he seems to have hesitated which passages to print and which to suppress. The successive editions vary considerably in their contents; paragraphs, even whole chapters, have been printed, then suppressed, then reinserted. As we have already mentioned, two separate French translations, each claiming to have been executed with the author's sanction, have recently appeared in Paris. That executed by M. Arvède Barine, which we have read, is, so far as a critic unfamiliar with Russian may be allowed to pass judgment, thoroughly fluent and readable, and on the showing of internal evidence, a faithful representation of the original.

The opening chapters of "Childhood"—the first of the three divisions of the "Memories"—introduce us to the Irteneff family when Nicolas was just ten years old, and give a wonderfully vivid set of pictures of the chief personages of that household, as well as of the surroundings in which they moved. With two exceptions—to be shortly mentioned—they cannot be pronounced to be very lovable or admirable types of humanity, but they are, at any rate, exceedingly human. There is the lonely old German tutor, sincerely attached to his young charges, sensitive on the score of his services, yet easily appeased by any show of attention; generous as a friend, and yet unable to repress a commercial instinct, which inclines us to suppose that Tolstoi has called him Mayer not by accident but of set purpose. Nicolas's father, again, is admirably drawn, and the slow but gradual process of disillusionment which takes place in the son's mind with respect to his parent is indicated with the subtlest skill. Worldly and selfish as he is, it is impossible to avoid having a sneaking liking for this middle-aged Lovelace, of chivalrous bearing and courteous manners, whose eyes filled with tears as he read aloud a pathetic passage, and whose life had been so full of *entraînements* that

he had never time to have principles, being for the rest too successful in life to see the necessity of them—a man, in fine, “who understood so perfectly how to hide from others and from himself the disagreeable side of life that it was impossible not to envy him.” *Apropos* of his mother, he writes: “When one tries to recall the features of a beloved person, so many recollections emerge at once that they obscure the vision just as tears do. These are the tears of the heart.” He can only recover a few charming details, but the *ensemble* escapes him. And yet the sketch is a touching one, and the language in which he speaks of his mother is always marked by a beautiful affection.

Of all the characters engaged, however, there is none so delightful as the old housekeeper, Nathalie Savichna, a type fortunately not common to Russia, and which will appeal with strange force to all who have known the wonderful capacity for unselfish devotion which is to be met with in a certain class of servants. Nathalie's history is curiously illustrative of the conditions of serfdom. As a girl, she had wished to marry a fellow-servant, and her master not approving, was degraded to the rank of a farm servant until she resigned her desire for matrimony. The decree of enfranchisement seemed to her, as to some of the negroes in America, as a sentence of banishment. What had she done to deserve dismissal at the hands of her beloved mistress? Accordingly we find her devoting the rest of her life to the service of Nicolas's mother, and the jealous guardianship of her interests and those of her children. What Nicolas thought of her may be gathered from the following passage:

“As far back as I can remember, I can recall the proofs of affection and the caresses of Nathalie Savichna, but it is only now that I know how to appreciate them. When I was a child I had no notion of the worth of this old woman. I did not suspect that she was worthy of adoration, or that there were few like her. Not only did she never speak, but she never even thought of herself: her whole life was nothing but love and self-denial. I was so accustomed to her disinterested affection for us that I never imagined the possibility of a different state of things, and was not in the least grateful to her. I never dreamt of asking myself whether she was happy and contented. I used often when in school to ask leave to go out, but it was merely an excuse, and I used to run off to Nathalie's room. I used to sit down and fall to musing out loud, without troubling myself about her presence. She was never idle. Sometimes she was knitting a stocking, sometimes rummaging in the chests of which her room was full, sometimes marking linen. I used to tell her that when I was a general, I should marry a wife of marvellous beauty. I should buy myself a chestnut horse and build myself a house of glass, and that I should write to Saxony to fetch the family of Karl Ivanitch [his tutor]. She used to listen to all my

nonsense, repeating from time to time: 'Yes, little father, yes.' Usually when I got up to go out, she used to open a blue chest, on the cover of which—how well I recollect it!—were gummed a coloured hussar, a little figure which came off a pot of pomade, and a drawing done by Volodia. She used to take a pastille out of this box, light it, and wave it about in the air. 'There, little father, that comes from Otchakov. When your late grandfather—God rest his soul!—went to fight the Turks, he brought it back. Only this little piece is left. That's the last of it,' she added with a sigh."

Nicolas only once had a quarrel with Nathalie. He had upset a glass of *krass* on one of her spotless table-cloths, and with his mother's approval, Nathalie, having laid in wait for him outside the dining-room, caught hold of the culprit and rubbed his face with the soiled portion, bidding him be careful never to repeat the offence. "This behaviour seemed to me so insulting that I regularly howled with rage." Nathalie, seeing his wrath, ran off hastily, while Nicolas continued to walk up and down in the hall, "planning how to punish the wrong which this impudent Nathalie had done me. After a few minutes, Nathalie re-appeared. She came up to me timidly: 'Come, dear, don't cry. Forgive me, I was stupid; forgive me, my little pigeon. See, this is for you.' She drew from under her shawl a roll of red paper, which she offered me with a trembling hand. There were two caramels and a dried fig in it. I had not the courage to look in the face of the kind old woman. I took the paper as I turned away, and my tears flowed all the faster, but it was no longer from anger: it was from affection and shame."

There is much, as we have said above, that is strange—even disconcerting—to English readers in the manners and usages of Russian life as depicted by so faithful a chronicler as Count Tolstoi. A superstitious reverence for mad people and idiots, as though they claimed special protection, is (or was) so universal among well-born Russians, that even Nicolas's father, with all his talent for avoiding disagreeables, had to submit, though not without some grumbling, to the periodic visits of the imbecile Gricha. Beset with a childish curiosity to see the chains which it was understood Gricha always wore beneath his tattered raiment, Nicolas and Volodia, his elder brother, hide themselves in a closet adjoining the room set apart for the idiot, and instead of being amused are strangely stirred and awed by the incoherent but touching prayers offered up in tones so earnest "that one would have said he expected to receive an answer on the spot."

Shortly after this episode, Nicolas sets out with his father for Moscow, a prey to the conflicting emotions of sorrow at parting from his mother and joy at the prospect of change and travel. For Count Tolstoi is relentlessly true to nature in describing the trivial and often unworthy thoughts that intrude themselves at

critical moments, not only into the minds of children, but those of grown-up people. These "Memories" abound in illustrations of the sometimes painful fact that absolutely unalloyed emotions are of the rarest occurrence. Nicolas was very sorry to leave his mother, but the need of this journey to Moscow, in order to carry on the education of himself and his brother, was in itself a welcome proof that he was becoming big, and this was flattering to his vanity. Less creditable is the confession that he derived a certain consolation from the fact that the tears which he continued to shed after they had started were a proof of his fine feeling.

The first episode of consequence in their town life is that of their grandmother's birthday party. Nicolas, anxious to strike out a new line in the way of a gift, resolves to compose a set of verses in her honour, and the difficulties he encounters in realizing his scheme and the aggravating consciousness of the false sentiment which pervades his first literary effort, are most amusingly described. Among the most disconcerting features of these "Memories" is the entire disregard which it displays of the code of honour as usually observed by an English schoolboy. Nicolas, being at a loss for a model for his verses, has no more compunction about rummaging among his tutor's papers than he has later on about prying into his father's correspondence. He is not strictly truthful, but the *naïveté* with which he owns to his various shortcomings helps not a little to mitigate their ugliness. Furthermore, though painfully conscious of his lack of good looks—his large feet, moujik's features, and rebellious hair—or perhaps we should say precisely because he is so conscious, he stands convicted of the vice of vanity. Indeed, a French critic, in treating of this work, has gone so far as to say that the net impression derived from its perusal is that vanity is the mainspring of human character. For our own part we should find it very difficult to reduce the resultant impressions from the study of such a work down to such scanty or unsatisfactory dimensions. Along with ignoble curiosity and other base traits in the character of Nicolas, there exist so many fine instincts and exalted aspirations that the general effect upon an optimist student of human nature is rather to confirm him in his views than to shake their stability. A curious and rather pathetic episode belonging to this period of the hero's life is his unrequited friendship for Sergius Ivine, a handsome, cruel, tyrannical boy, for fear of crossing whom Nicolas was ready to stifle his better feelings. Thus, though merciful and tender-hearted as a rule, he was content to help Sergius to bully young Grapp, the son of a poor German, simply lest he should lose the former's goodwill. There is indeed something touching, spite of its evil results, in this childish hero-worship, this "disinterested and immense affection which expired without finding a vent or awakening an echo." Already

Nicolas had reached the age when children begin to ape their seniors, a practice with regard to which Count Tolstoi makes some characteristic comments :

"Strange to say, when I was a child I tried to be like grown-up people; and since I have become grown up, I have longed to be like a child. How often, in my relations with Sergius, has the fear of seeming childish made me stifle my feelings and play the hypocrite? Not only was I afraid to kiss him, though I sometimes would have given anything to do it, or to take his hand, or say how glad I was to see him, but I did not even venture to call him by his pet name *Sérïoja*, and always called him Sergius, for this was the understanding between us. Every sign of sentiment seemed to us *childish*. We had not yet traversed those bitter experiences which render grown-up persons prudent and reserved in their relations, and yet we deprived ourselves of the innocent joys of sweet childish friendship simply for the singular satisfaction of imitating our elders."

The children's ball at which Nicolas loses his heart to Sonia is full of natural and amusing touches, and the picture of Sonia herself is prettily drawn, especially where it is said that her face was one on which you did not expect to see a smile, and that for that very reason the smile, when it did come, was all the more bewitching. All the incidents of this party, and notably the rapid vicissitudes of nervousness and confidence which Nicolas passed through, are delightfully told. *Apròpos* of shyness, Count Tolstoi makes the following acute remark: "The sufferings of shy people are due to the fact that they are ignorant of the impression which they have produced. As soon as this impression, no matter what it may be, is clearly manifested, the suffering ceases." This is illustrated by the course of his conversation with Sonia. He was terribly embarrassed at first, and did not know what on earth to talk to her about. At last, dreading that she might take him for a fool, he resolved at all hazards to counteract such a false impression :

"'Vous êtes une habitante de Moscou?' I remarked to her, in French. On receiving an affirmative answer I went on, 'Moi, je n'ai encore jamais fréquenté la capitale.' I counted a great deal on the effect of the word 'fréquenter'; however, I became conscious that after this brilliant start, which showed how I excelled in French, it would be impossible for me to maintain the conversation at the same pitch. It would not be our turn for some time to dance again, and the silence had recommenced. I looked at her with embarrassment, anxious to know what impression I was making, and waiting for her to come to my aid. 'Where did you get that funny glove?' she asked all at once, and this question gave me the utmost pleasure and relief. I explained to her that the glove belonged to Karl Ivanitch, and I dilated with a certain irony upon his appear-

ance. I described how grotesque he looked when he took off his red skull-cap; how he had tumbled off his horse one day right into a pond, &c. The quadrille went like lightning. All this was delightful, but why should I have scoffed at Karl Ivanitch? Should I have lost the good opinion of Sonia, if I had spoken of him with the affection and respect which he inspired in me?"

In sad contrast to these gaieties is the letter announcing their mother's dangerous illness and their hasty return to their country seat. The scenes in the sick room are painted with that amazing vividness which is so characteristic of Tolstoi in dealing with these subjects. It has been truly said that death has a strange fascination for Russian novelists, and though the last hours of Nicolas's mother are not described with that painful minuteness which marks similar passages in "War and Peace," the mystery and horror as felt by a child are brought home to the reader with singular force. One of the most striking passages in the book is that which records the strangely mixed feelings that crowded in upon Nicolas as he went to see his mother for the last time, telling how mental pictures of his mother in a variety of living phases alternated with the dreadful reality before him and were succeeded by a sort of numb torpor, during which latter period alone his grief was absolutely unalloyed. At every other moment it was mingled with and debased by other feelings. The attitude of the strangers and bystanders was intolerable to him. Their stock phrases of officious condolence only served to add to his irritation, and he compares the zeal they showed to be the first to allude to him and his brother and sister as orphans to that evinced by guests in saluting a bride by her married name. On the other hand the unaffected homely grief of Nathalie had the effect of making him feel ashamed of himself. This powerful but painful chapter closes with one rather gruesome touch. In accordance with the custom observed on such occasions all the peasants came forward to kiss the uncovered face of the dead. Almost the last of this number was a woman who had in her arms a little child of about five years old. As she advanced Nicolas heard an appalling scream, and looking up saw the peasant woman trying to calm the little child, who was struggling, throwing herself back and shrieking as she looked on the corpse with dilated eyes. "The notion that this face, so fair and lovable only a few days before, the face of her whom I loved best in the world, could inspire horror, disclosed to me, so to speak, the cruel truth, and filled my soul with despair."

Nicolas found the best solace for his sorrow in the talks he used to have with Nathalie. "Ah! little father," said she [in answer to his question whether she expected his mother's death], casting on me a look of singular melancholy and affection, "one could not possibly have expected it, and I cannot yet think about it. I am an old woman; my old bones ought long since to have been

laid to rest, and yet I outlive them all—the old master your grandfather, of eternal memory, the prince Nicolas Mikhailovitch, his two brothers, his sister Annouchka, I have seen them all go down to the grave, and they were all younger than I, little father, and now it is my fate to outlive even *her*—for my sins, no doubt. May His blessed will be done! He has taken her because she deserved it; even above God has need of the good." This whole scene, illustrating at every turn the guileless nature of this good old woman, her quaint superstition and sure hope of speedily rejoining her beloved mistress, is exceedingly affecting.

Soon after this the family leave again for Moscow, and Nathalie's hope of reunion is quickly realized. The story of her end is very simply told, but the narrative is so moving that it would involve a severe exercise of self-control to read it aloud. There is a strain of infinitely tender regret in these pages which invests the humble details of Nathalie's lonely but contented death-bed with a dignity and beauty of the rarest order. "She had no fear of death, but welcomed it as a blessing. That is a remark which is often made, but how rarely is it true! Nathalie Savichna could not fear death, for she died in unshaken faith, and she had accomplished the law of the Gospel; her whole life had been nothing but pure and disinterested love and self-sacrifice. What! because her religion might have been of a higher order, because her life might have had a more exalted aim, is this rare spirit on that account less worthy of affection and admiration? She achieved the noblest and best work in this world—she died without fear or regret."

"Boyhood," the second division of this work, opens with the description of another journey to Moscow, during the course of which Nicolas's point of view suddenly and seriously altered. The means by which this change was effected was a conversation of a sufficiently ordinary character with one of the party. But none the less completely on that account was the result achieved. Everything seemed to present to him a new and hitherto unfamiliar side. He realized for the first time what in a sense he had known before, but not fully—that there were other beings on the earth besides his family, and that all interests did not centre in *them*. This expansion continued on his arrival in Moscow, where the fear he had hitherto felt of his grandmother gave way to compassion and tenderness, while on the other hand his eyes were daily opened to the defects of his father's character. About this time Nicolas lost his heart again, on this occasion to one of their servants, and in connection with this short-lived affection he relates rather a grotesque episode. While hiding beneath the stairs he surprises his brother Volodia, a boy of sixteen, kissing this pretty chambermaid, who struggles and protests that his brother Nicolas would never have behaved like that, little thinking that Nicolas was within earshot, and would have given

anything to have been in Volodia's shoes. The account of their studies under the new tutor—the old German had been dismissed on the ground of his inability to keep them in proper order—is marked by some curious and interesting episodes. Nicolas's idleness reaches a crisis on his sister's birthday. At his history lesson, which was always a penance to him, he breaks down hopelessly, and is given the worst mark, nor has he the courage to contradict Volodia when the latter informs their tutor that their history master had given Nicolas a four, the best mark but one. To make matters worse he is led by his curiosity, on being sent on an errand to his father's room, to pry into the latter's correspondence, with the result that the domestic idol sinks still further in his esteem. On trying to relock the desk the key snaps off and he is foredoomed to detection. He behaves naughtily at their games, but is punished by Sonia's paying no regard to him, and forthwith becomes a misogynist for the nonce, ready to set the house on fire or work some serious mischief out of the sheer childish desire to do something. On this temporary eclipse of the reasoning faculty, when the material instincts become the sole springs of action, Count Tolstoi comments with extraordinary acuteness of perception. It was in such a mood that Nicolas met and insulted his tutor when the latter came to remove him. The chapter which portrays his feelings when locked up in the dark, and momentarily expecting to be flogged, is wonderfully vivid and powerful. Convinced that every one hated him, Nicolas is driven there and then to invent, and finally well-nigh comes to believe in, an absurd cause for this supposed hatred—he was an orphan, a foundling. Then his fancy took wings; he saw himself demanding explanations from his father, acting and speaking in a vein of sentimental self-sacrifice—How many of us, like Daudet's M. Joyeuse, have been and are slaves to these fancies!—or he was free, a soldier, a victorious general to whom the Czar offered what he would, and he saw and heard himself demanding leave to annihilate his tutor. But at that moment the whole dream-fabric toppled down at the thought of his tutor entering in the flesh with his birch rod; he was no longer the hero and saviour of his country, but, bathed in tears, plunged in humiliation, the most miserable creature alive.

Following hard on this episode comes a period in which Nicolas lived in a state of moral isolation, sunk in himself and harassing his mind with the consideration of the deepest and most inscrutable problems. His crude reasonings sometimes led him to see happiness in indifference to external events, and for the time he would play the stoic. Anon since death was always nigh, he saw true wisdom in enjoying the pleasure of the moment, and so, "under the influence of this idea, for three whole days I neglected my lessons, and spent my time stretched on my bed amusing myself with reading a novel or eating gingerbread."

The result of all this intellectual fatigue, he notes, was "a mental agility, which weakened the force of my will, and a habit of incessant moral analysis which robbed my sensations of all freshness, and my judgment of all precision." And yet in spite of all his dreams of intellectual greatness, and the self-satisfaction caused by these discoveries, which seemed to lift him above the level of his fellows, he was not a whit less frightened, shy, or ashamed of himself in the company of these same people. This part of his life he declares to be peculiarly painful and irksome to retrace, though its dreariness was occasionally illumined by flashes of sincere and ardent emotion. Volodia was now entering upon University life, and his cleverness, his good looks, his independence and grown-up ways, inspired Nicolas with a lively sense of admiration. His sister, Lioubotchka, and her friend Catherine are described and contrasted in a very interesting chapter, which shows how the good looks, the *sensiblerie*, and gush of the latter proved more taking to his unformed judgment than Lioubotchka's unattractive exterior and blunt sincerity. Digressing to give some account of his moral and intellectual progress, he confesses that the sole reason why he took up mathematics was that the terms *sine*, *tangent*, *differential*, *integral*, pleased him immensely. His lack of good looks was still a source of discontent, partially mitigated, however, when his father declared him to be *intelligently plain*. His distaste for his tutor, again, almost changed to affection when the latter spoke highly of his abilities. The opportune marriage of the pretty housemaid entirely chilled his affection in that quarter, and, finally, he notices that he was beginning to correct his boyish faults, except the worst and most troublesome of all—the passion for reasoning. The last two chapters of "Boyhood" give some account of his brother's friends, Doubkof and Nékhlioudof. The former was a man of the world, and agreeable, as people often are, by reason of his limited intelligence. "Only being able to see one side of a question, they are always *entraînés*. Their opinions are exclusive and incorrect, but always sincere and attractive." Nékhlioudof, on the other hand, was serious and enthusiastic, and won Nicolas's heart by the frankness of his praise. They take to long *tête-à-tête* discussions, "full of intelligent absurdities," and make a mutual resolve to have no secrets from each other, at the same time that they are pledged never to discuss each other before strangers. Nicolas assimilates his friend's manner of looking at things, at the bottom of which was an enthusiastic worship of ideal virtue, associated with the conviction that man was destined to continuous progress. Still, he owns, at the outset of the third section of the "Memories," that his friend's optimistic views "had only seduced his intellect; his mode of life did not otherwise alter until his virtuous thoughts suddenly imposed themselves upon him with the force of a moral resolution." Nominally

occupied with his preparations for entering the University, Nicolas is obliged to own that he spent a great deal of time in other pursuits—in day dreams, in gymnastic exercises "in order to become the strongest man in the world," and in aimless loungings and *séances* before his looking-glass, which he never quitted without a sense of profound discouragement, even of disgust. In agreeable contrast with the foregoing passage is the succeeding chapter, which gives a wonderfully vivid and beautiful picture of the dawning of a Russian spring, and in regard to which Tolstoi remarks: "I do not know why it is, but I think that the impression produced by this birth of spring is more lively and profound in a great town—one sees less, but one divines more." The need of an immediate moral regeneration is suddenly brought home to him by this sensation of dawning life all around. He makes all sorts of good resolutions with regard to his devotions, to almsgiving and orderliness, and is forthwith led into his favourite practice of day-dreaming, a not impossible but seraphic *she* forming the background. Abruptly dismissing this amorous vision, Nicolas declares to himself that, on the contrary, he will avoid all disturbing contact with womenkind. "I will take a great deal of exercise, and practise gymnastics every day. At twenty-five I shall be stronger than Rappo. The first day I shall hold out a weight of fifteen pounds at arm's length for five minutes, the next day a weight of sixteen pounds, the next of seventeen pounds, and so on, until I am able to hold sixty pounds in each hand. I shall then be stronger than all our servants. When any one ventures to insult or speak disrespectfully of *her* I shall just take him by the waistband—so—I shall lift him up with one hand, and I shall hold him in the air two or three feet off the ground, just to show my strength, without doing him any harm. . . . Let not my readers," he adds, "reproach me with these youthful day-dreams under the pretext that they were as childish as when I was quite small. I am convinced that if I am destined to live to be very old, even at seventy years of age, I shall indulge in dreams as infantile and fantastic as these."

At the bottom of all these dreams he notices four main sentiments—love for *her*, the woman of his imagination; passionate longing to be loved; a vague expectation of some ineffable happiness; and lastly, a feeling of horror and despair about himself, so intimately mingled with a passionate desire for improvement as not to be altogether painful. It seemed to be so easy to break with the past, that the past did not trouble him. An interesting chapter is that in which Nicolas describes the day of confession in the family, and in the different ways in which the various members of it bore themselves before and after the confessional. To him it was a shock that his surroundings did not undergo the same transfiguration that he himself seemed to experience. With

his entrance examination imminent, he describes the frequent inability he felt to settle down to work, due to the sentiment of liberty and his boyish expectation that some extraordinary event was about to happen. The scent of spring or the rustling of a skirt was quite enough to unhinge his application and destroy a morning's work. The picture of his formal *entrée* on grown-up life is delightfully entertaining. Immensely proud of his students' uniform, and quite unable to keep up an air of indifference before the servants, Nicolas felt that at everything that was said to him an inane smirk of satisfaction spread on his face, and could not help remarking that this same smirk communicated itself to all who spoke to him. The visits, divided by his father into indispensable and optional, which Nicolas found himself called upon to pay in connection with his assumption of man's estate, were, one and all, productive of great discomfort. In the presence of his superiors he was always apprehensive of rebuffs, and in consequence always prepared to assert his indifference. Again, when he went to call on the Valakhines, as soon as he decided that he was still in love with Sonia, his ease vanished, and on the appearance of her mother he was seized with such an excess of shyness as to be glued to his chair, until the arrival of a stranger caused a diversion and enabled him to get up and take his leave. The greatest trial of all awaited him at the Ivines, when he was met with frigid politeness by the son, and absolute indifference by the father. Lastly his visit to the old prince Ivan Ivanovitch was spoilt by a needless pre-occupation lest he should appear in the false position of a fortune hunter. "It was only long afterwards that I learnt by the experience of life how wrong it is to think, and even more so to say, a quantity of things which appear to us to be very noble, but which ought to remain buried for ever in the depths of the human heart. I learned, also, that fine words are rarely attended by fine deeds. I am convinced that the mere fact of having *expressed* a good intention renders its realization difficult, generally impossible." The visit to the Nékhloudof household, though not so attractive as other parts of the book, is noticeable for the interesting disquisition on the three sorts of love which is suggested by the character of Sophie Ivanovna, one of those old maids intended for domestic life, but who, having been denied that happiness, make it their business to lavish on a chosen few the stores of love amassed during all the years in which they looked forward to having a husband and children. Tolstoi dismisses for the time being the love felt by a young man for a young girl, or *vice versa*—attachments which he says always fill him with dismay—and proceeds to divide love—by which he means love felt by a human creature for other human creatures—into three kinds: elegant love, devoted love, and active love. The first he defines as consisting in being enamoured of the beauty of

the sentiment which one experiences and in a complacent satisfaction in the expression of it. "In my country," he goes on, "people of a certain class who love in this elegant fashion are not content to speak of it to everybody, they always speak of it *in French*. It is an absurd and grotesque thing to say, but I am convinced that there have been and are—in a certain circle—many persons, especially women, in whom the love they feel for friends, husband, and children would cease the moment it was forbidden to be expressed in French." Devoted love consists, on the other hand, in loving the operation of the sacrifice one makes in behalf of the beloved object without troubling oneself in the least to ascertain whether the beloved object will find him or herself the better or worse for it. This sort of love is analyzed and illustrated with astonishing penetration; the truth with which the author points out the jealousy and the harassing nature of this love being at times almost painful. Thirdly, and finally, active love consists in a vehement desire to satisfy all the needs, wants, caprices, reasonable and unreasonable, of the beloved one. Even the faults of the beloved are dear to those possessed by this love, inasmuch as they furnish further needs to be satisfied. "Such persons," he adds, "rarely express their love in words, and if they do so it is awkwardly and shyly expressed, for they are always afraid of not loving enough; and such was the love that could be read in the eyes, the movements, and the words of Sophie Ivanovna." Another acute observation is made in connection with the inner life of the Nékhlioudof family. "How often it happens that one knows a family for years without being allowed, by the deceptive veil of *les bienséances*, to perceive the true relation of the members of this family one with the other. The thicker the veil," he continues, "the uglier are the true relations."

The succeeding chapter relates in singularly effective fashion the impressions caused by the sight, after a long interval, of the familiar surroundings of childhood, and the caressing effect of old associations. By this time the relations between Volodia and Nicolas on the one hand, and their sister and her companion on the other, had altered and become rather strained, chiefly owing to Volodia's theories as to the intellectual inferiority of women-kind. He never treated them seriously, answering their questions with some cant phrase or nonsensical remark. This contempt Tolstoi explains with his usual acumen as follows: "The prosaic recollections of childhood were too strong, or else it was due to the kind of aversion which very young people feel towards every one belonging to their own household, or to that weakness which impels all of us when we meet goodness and beauty at the outset of our career to pass on, saying, 'Bah, I shall find plenty of that in the course of life.'" Nicolas copied Volodia's sentiments in this regard; and in connection with this there occurs another remarkable passage on that faculty of mutual understanding developed

more or less in every circle or family. Tolstoi defines it, in its essence, as the habit of applying to surrounding objects the same conventional measure and of viewing them from the same conventional standpoint. "Two persons of the same set or of the same family endowed with the faculty in question will never overstep certain bounds in the expression of sentiment, because they each of them recognize cant in such excess. They perceive, likewise, the point at which praise becomes irony, and warmth hypocrisy, whilst others outside the circle may judge quite differently." From this he goes on to describe his occupations and ambitions, his desire—aroused by the visit of a stranger—to play the piano, his notion of music being simply "a means of fascinating girls by the exhibition of sentiment," and his execrable choice of pieces; his taste in fiction, and his capacity for discovering in himself—just like a hypochondriac—all the passions attributed by novelists to their most preposterous creations.

Nicolas's ideal hero at this period was a man of violent passions and extraordinarily thick eyebrows, but a more practical and attainable standard was that summed up in the magic words "*comme il faut*," the ambition to become which he declares to have been one of the most false and pernicious of all those developed in him by education and society. After summarizing the main and the minor essentials of the man who was "*comme il faut*," he adds that the worst of it all was not the waste of time, nor the contempt it inspired in him for his fellows, but the conviction which he held for the time being, that in being "*comme il faut*" a man had done his duty in the world and fulfilled his destiny. "The '*comme-il-faut*' man," he adds, "never wakes up to the necessity of doing any work in the world."

The "*Memories*" are full of abrupt transitions and contrasts, and the chapter which succeeds this shrewd and entertaining disquisition is the most beautiful and poetical in the book. It merely relates the way in which he used to spend a summer's day in the country; describing his early bathe in the stream, followed by a ramble through the fields with his head full of wild visions of happiness and love; his visits to the kitchen garden, where he would sit and eat fruit by the hour, amid all the scents and sounds of the summer; his afternoon rides, the music in the evening, his leisurely preparations for going to bed, the gradual dying away of all the stir and life in the house, winding up with a wonderful picture of the magical beauty that everything assumed in the silent moonlight, when the most ordinary sounds are invested with a mystical charm, until his romantic and sensuous imaginings gave way before a sense of union with nature in its surpassing beauty. We could almost have wished that the volume had ended here, for anything that came after this chapter was bound to be somewhat of an anti-climax. As it is, half-a-dozen short chapters remain, telling of the second marriage of

Nicolas's father, and the gradual cooling of his friendship with Nékhlioudof—the result of their dangerous vow to tell everything to each other.

Such then in imperfect outline is the earliest of Tolstoi's masterpieces. We have attempted no critical estimate of it, confining ourselves rather to a description, illustrated here and there by quotation of its contents. For in the presence of and while under the influence of genius of such a high order as is here displayed, it is impossible to take notice of the flaws and blemishes by which the work is occasionally disfigured. It is like listening to Rubinstein playing. Wrong notes are struck now and then, exaggerations occur here and violences there. But in the face of so much force and tenderness, and above all of that magical power of laying hold of the heart of his audience, the critical faculty is temporarily suspended. Although this paper has run to an undue length, it has not exhausted a tithe of the beauties of Count Tolstoi's pages. If it has succeeded in interesting those who have followed us thus far, we can promise them a rich harvest of enjoyment on turning to the original from which this sketch is taken.

THE HIRED BABY :

A ROMANCE OF THE LONDON STREETS.

By MARIE CORELLI,

AUTHOR OF "VENDETTA," "THELMA," ETC.

A DARK, desolate December night—a night that clung to the metropolis like a wet black shroud—a night in which the heavy low-hanging vapours melted every now and then into a slow reluctant rain, cold as icicle drops in a rock-cavern. People passed and repassed in the streets like ghosts in a bad dream; the twinkling gaslight showed them at one moment rising out of the fog and then disappearing from view as though suddenly engulfed in a vaporous ebon sea. With muffled angry shrieks, the metropolitan trains deposited their shoals of shivering, coughing travellers at the several stations, where sleepy officials, rendered vicious by the weather, snatched the tickets from their hands with offensive haste and roughness. Omnibus conductors grew ill-tempered and abusive without any seemingly adequate reason; shopkeepers became flippant, disobliging and careless of custom; cabmen shouted derisive or denunciatory language after their rapidly retreating fares; in short everybody was in a discontented, almost spiteful humour, with the exception of those few aggressively cheerful persons who are in the habit of always making the best of everything, even bad weather. Down the long wide vista of the Cromwell Road, Kensington, the fog had it all its own way; it swept on steadily, like thick smoke from a huge fire, choking the throats and blinding the eyes of foot-passengers, stealing through the crannies of the houses, and chilling the blood of even those luxurious individuals who, seated in elegant drawing-rooms before blazing fires, easily forgot that there were such bitter things as cold and poverty in that outside world against which they had barred their doors. At one house in particular—a house with gaudy glass doors and somewhat soiled yellow silk curtains at the windows—a house that plainly said of itself—"Done up for show!" to all who cared to examine its exterior—there stood a closed brougham drawn by a prancing pair of fat horses. A coachman of distinguished appearance sat on the box: a footman of irreproachable figure stood waiting on the pavement, his yellow-gloved hand

resting elegantly on the polished silver knob of the carriage-door. Both these gentlemen were resolute and inflexible of face; they looked as if they had determined on some great deed that should move the world to wild applause,—but, truth to tell, they had only just finished a highly satisfactory “meat-tea,” and before this grave silence had fallen upon them they had been discussing the advisability of broiled steak and onions for supper. The coachman had inclined to plain mutton-chops as being easier of digestion; the footman had earnestly asseverated his belief in the superior succulence and sweetness of the steak and onions, and in the end he had gained his point. This weighty question being settled, they had gradually grown reflective on the past, present, and future joys of eating at some one else’s expense, and in this bland and pleasing state of meditation they were still absorbed. The horses were impatient and pawed the muddy ground with many a toss of their long manes and tails, the steam from their glossy coats mingling with the ever-thickening density of the fog. On the white stone steps of the residence before which they waited, was an almost invisible bundle, apparently shapeless and immovable. Neither of the two gorgeous personages in livery observed it; it was too far back in a dim corner, too unobtrusive for the casual regard of their lofty eyes. Suddenly the glass doors before-mentioned were thrown apart with a clattering noise, a warmth and radiance from the entrance-hall thus displayed streamed into the foggy street, and at the same instant the footman, still with grave and imperturbable countenance, opened the brougham. An elderly lady, richly dressed, with diamonds sparkling in her grey hair, came rustling down the steps, bringing with her faint odours of patchouli and violet powder. She was followed by a girl of doll-like prettiness with a snub nose and petulant little mouth, who held up her satin and lace skirts with a sort of fastidious disdain as though she scorned to set foot on earth that was not carpeted with the best velvet pile. As they approached their carriage, the inert dark bundle crouched in the corner started into life,—a woman with wild hair and wilder eyes,—whose pale lips quivered with suppressed weeping as her piteous voice broke into sudden clamour:

“Oh lady!” she cried, “for the love of God a trifle! Oh lady, lady!”

But the “lady” with a contemptuous sniff and a shake of her scented garments passed her before she could continue her appeal, and she turned with a sort of faint hope to the softer face of the girl.

“Oh, my dear, *do* have pity! Just the smallest little thing, and God will bless you! You are rich and happy—and I am starving! Only a penny! For the baby—the poor little baby!” and she made as though she would open her tattered shawl and reveal some treasure hidden therein, but shrank back repelled

by the cold merciless gaze that fell upon her from those eyes in which youth dwelt without tenderness.

"You have no business on our door-step," said the girl harshly. "Go away directly, or I shall tell my servant to call a policeman."

Then as she entered the brougham after her mother, she addressed the respectable footman angrily, giving him the benefit of a strong nasal intonation.

"Howard, why do you let such dirty beggars come near the carriage? What are you paid for I should like to know? It is perfectly disgraceful to the house!"

"Very sorry, miss!" said the footman gravely; "I didn't see the—the person before." Then shutting the brougham door, he turned with a dignified air to the unfortunate creature who still lingered near, and with a sweeping gesture of his gold-embroidered coat-sleeve, said majestically:

"Do you 'ear? Be hoff!"

Then having thus performed his duty, he mounted the box beside his friend the coachman, and the equipage rattled quickly away, its gleaming lights soon lost in the smoke-laden vapours that drooped downwards like funeral hangings from the invisible sky to the scarcely visible ground. Left to herself, the woman who had vainly sought charity from those in whom no charity existed, looked up despairingly as one distraught, and seemed as though she would have given vent to some fierce exclamation, when a feeble wail came pitifully forth from the sheltering folds of her shawl. She restrained herself instantly and walked on at a rapid pace, scarcely heeding whither she went, till she reached the Catholic church known as the "Oratory." Its unfinished *façade* loomed darkly out of the fog; there was nothing picturesque or inviting about it, yet there were people passing softly in and out, and through the swinging to and fro of the red baize-covered doors there came a comforting warm glimmer of light. The woman paused, hesitated,—and then having apparently made up her mind, ascended the broad steps, looked in and finally entered. The place was strange to her,—she knew nothing of its religious meaning, and its cold uncompleted appearance oppressed her. There were only some half-dozen persons scattered about like black specks in its vast white interior, and the fog hung heavily in the vaulted dome and dark little chapels. One corner alone blazed with brilliancy and colour;—this was the Altar of the Virgin. Towards it the tired vagrant made her way, and on reaching it sank on the nearest chair as though exhausted. She did not raise her eyes to the marble splendours of the shrine—one of the masterpieces of old Italian art; she had been merely attracted to the spot by the glitter of the lamps and candles, and took no thought as to the reason of their being lit, though she was sensible of a certain comfort in the soft lustre shed around her. she seemed still young; her face, rendered haggard by long and

bitter privation, showed traces of past beauty, and her eyes, full of feverish trouble, were large, dark and still lustrous. Her mouth alone—that sensitive betrayer of the life's good and bad actions—revealed that all had not been well with her; its lines were hard and vicious, and the resentful curve of the upper lip spoke of foolish pride not unmixed with reckless sensuality. She sat for a minute or two motionless,—then with exceeding care and tenderness she began to unfold her thin torn shawl by gentle degrees, looking down with anxious solicitude at the object concealed within it. Only a baby,—and withal a baby so tiny and white and frail that it seemed as though it must melt like a snow-flake beneath the lightest touch. As its wrappings were loosened, it opened a pair of large, solemn blue eyes and gazed at the woman's face with a strange pitiful wistfulness. It lay quiet, without moan,—a pinched pale miniature of suffering humanity,—an infant with sorrow's mark painfully impressed upon its drawn small features. Presently it stretched forth a puny hand and feebly caressed its protectress, and this too with the faintest glimmer of a smile. The woman responded to its affection with a sort of rapture; she caught it fondly to her breast and covered it with kisses, rocking it to and fro with broken words of motherly endearment. “My little darling!” she whispered softly. “My little pet! Yes, yes I know! So tired, so cold and hungry! Never mind, baby, never mind! we will rest here a little, then we will sing a song presently and get some money to take us home. Sleep a while longer, dearie! There! now we are warm and cosy again.”

So saying she re-arranged her shawl in closer and tighter folds so as to protect the child more thoroughly. While she was engaged in this operation, a lady in deep mourning passed close by her, and advancing to the very steps of the altar, knelt down, hiding her face with her clasped hands. The tired wayfarer's attention was attracted by this; she gazed with a sort of dull wonder at the kneeling figure robed in rich rustling silk and crape, and gradually her eyes wandered upwards, upwards, till they rested on the gravely sweet and serenely smiling marble image of the Virgin and Child. She looked and looked again—surprised—incredulous; then suddenly rose to her feet and made her way to the altar railing. There she paused, staring vaguely at a basket of flowers, white and odorous, that had been left there by some reverent worshipper. She glanced doubtfully at the swinging silver lamps, the twinkling candles; she was conscious too of a subtle strange fragrance in the air as though a basketful of spring violets and daffodils had just been carried by; then, as her wandering gaze came back to the solitary woman in black who still knelt motionless near her, a sort of choking sensation came into her throat and a stinging moisture struggled in her eyes. She strove to turn this hysterical sensation to a low laugh of

disdain, "Lord, Lord!" she muttered beneath her breath, "what sort of place is this, where they pray to a woman and a baby?"

At that moment the lady in black rose; she was young, with a proud, fair but weary face. Her eyes lighted on her soiled and poverty-stricken sister, and she paused with a pitying look. The street wanderer made use of the opportunity thus offered, and in an urgent whisper implored charity. The lady drew out her purse, then hesitated, looking wistfully at the bundle in the shawl.

"You have a little child there?" she asked in gentle accents. "May I see it?"

"Yes, lady;" and the wrapper was turned down sufficiently to disclose the tiny white face, now more infinitely touching than ever in the pathos of sleep.

"I lost my little one a week ago," said the lady simply, as she looked at it. "He was all I had." Her voice trembled, she opened her purse and placed a half-crown in the hand of the astonished supplicant. "You are happier than I am; perhaps you will pray for me! I am very lonely!"

Then dropping her long crape veil so that it completely hid her features, she bent her head and moved softly away. The woman watched her till her graceful figure was completely lost in the gloom of the great church, and then turned again vaguely to the altar.

"Pray for her!" she thought. "I! As if I could pray!" And she smiled bitterly. Again she looked at the statue in the shrine; it had no meaning at all for her. She had never heard of Christianity save through the medium of a tract, whose consoling title had been "Stop! You are going to Hell!" Religion of every sort was mocked at by those among whom her lot was cast, the name of Christ was only used as a convenience to swear by, and therefore this mysteriously smiling, gently inviting marble figure was incomprehensible to her mind.

"As if I could pray!" she repeated with a sort of derision. Then she looked at the broad silver coin in her hand and the sleeping baby in her arms. With a sudden impulse she dropped on her knees.

"Whoever you are," she muttered, addressing the statue above her, "it seems you've got a child of your own; perhaps you'll help me to take care of this one. It isn't mine; I wish it was! Anyway I love it more than its own mother does. I daresay you won't listen to the likes of me, but if there was God anywhere about I'd ask Him to bless that good soul that's lost her baby. I bless her with all my heart, but my blessing ain't good for much. Ah!" and she surveyed anew the Virgin's serene white countenance, "you look just as if you understood me, but I don't believe you do! Never mind, I've said all I wanted to say this time."

Her strange petition or rather discourse concluded, she rose and walked away. The great doors of the church swung heavily behind her as she stepped out and stood once more in the muddy street. It was raining steadily—a fine, cold, penetrating rain. But the coin she held was a talisman against outer discomforts, and she continued to walk on till she came to a clean-looking dairy, where for a couple of pence she was able to replenish the infant's long ago emptied feeding-bottle; but she purchased nothing for herself. She had starved all day and was now too faint to eat. Soon she entered an omnibus and was driven to Charing Cross, and alighting at the great station, brilliant with its electric light, she paced up and down outside it, accosting several of the passers-by and imploring their pity. One man gave her a penny; another, young and handsome, with a flushed intemperate face and a look of his fast-fading boyhood still about him, put his hand in his pocket and drew out all the loose coppers it contained, amounting to three pennies and an odd farthing, and dropping them into her outstretched palm, said half gaily, half boldly:

"You ought to do better than that with those big eyes of yours!" She drew back and shuddered; he broke into a coarse laugh and went his way. Standing where he had left her, she seemed for a time lost in wretched reflections, the fretful wailing cry of the child she carried roused her and hushing it softly, she murmured: "Yes, yes, darling, it is too wet and cold for you; we had better go." And acting suddenly on her resolve, she hailed another omnibus, this time bound for Tottenham Court Road, and was, after some dreary jolting, set down at her final destination—a dirty alley in the worst part of Seven Dials. Entering it, she was hailed with a shout of derisive laughter from some rough-looking men and woman who were standing grouped round a low gin-shop at the corner.

"Here's Liz!" cried one. "Here's Liz and the bloomin' kid!"

"Now, old gel, fork out! How much 'ave yer got, Liz? Treat us to a drop all round!"

Liz walked past them steadily; the conspicuous curve of her upper lip came into full play and her eyes flashed disdainfully, but she said nothing. Her silence exasperated a tangle-haired, cat-faced girl of some seventeen years, who, more than half drunk, sat on the ground clasping her knees with both arms and rocking herself lazily to and fro. "Mother Mawks!" cried she, "Mother Mawks! You're wanted! Here's Liz come back with you're babby!"

As if her words had been a powerful incantation to summon forth an evil spirit, a door in one of the miserable houses was thrown open and a stout woman, nearly naked to the waist, with a swollen, blotched and most hideous countenance, rushed out furiously, and darting at Liz, shook her violently by the arm.

"Where's my shullin'?" she yelled, "where's my gin? Out with it! Out with my shullin' and fourpence! None of your sneakin' ways with me; a bargain's a bargain all the world over! You're makin' a fortin' with my babby—yer know y'are; pays yer a deal better than yer old trade! Don't say it don't—yer knows it do. Yer'll not find such a sickly kid anywheres, an' it's the sickly kids wot pays an' moves the 'arts of the *kyind* ladies and *good* gentlemen,"—this with an imitative whine that excited the laughter and applause of her hearers. "You've got it cheap, I kin tell yer, an' if yer don't pay up reg'lar, there's others that'll take the chance, and thankful too!"

She stopped for lack of breath and Liz spoke quietly:

"It's all right, Mother Mawks," she said with an attempt at a smile; "here's your shilling, here's the four pennies for the gin. I don't owe you anything for the child now." She stopped and hesitated, looking down tenderly at the frail creature in her arms, then added almost pleadingly, "It's asleep now. May I take it with me to-night?"

Mother Mawks, who had been testing the coins Liz had given her by biting them ferociously with her large yellow teeth, broke into a loud laugh.

"Take it with yer! I like that! Wot imperence! Take it with yer!" Then with her huge red arms akimbo, she added with a grin, "Tell yer wot, if yer likes to pay me 'arf-a-crown, yer can 'ave it to cuddle an' welcome!"

Another shout of approving merriment burst from the drink-soddened spectators of the little scene, and the girl crouched on the ground removed her encircling hands from her knees to clap them loudly, as she exclaimed:

"Well done, Mother Mawks! One doesn't let out kids at night for nothing! 'Tought to be more expensive than day-time!"

The face of Liz had grown white and rigid.

"You know I can't give you that money," she said slowly. "I have not tasted bit or drop all day. I must live, though it doesn't seem worth while. The child," and her voice softened involuntarily, "is fast asleep; it's a pity to wake it, that's all. It will cry and fret all night, and—and I would make it warm and comfortable if you'd let me." She raised her eyes hopefully and anxiously, "Will you?"

Mother Mawks was evidently a lady of an excitable disposition. The simple request seemed to drive her nearly frantic. She raised her voice to an absolute scream, thrusting her dirty hands through her still dirtier hair as the proper accompanying gesture to her vituperative oratory.

"Will I! Will I!" she screeched. "Will I let out my hown babby for the night for nothing? Will I? No, I won't! I'll see yer blowed into the middle of next week fust! Lor' a'mussey! 'ow 'igh an' mighty we are gittin', to be sure! The babby'll be

quiet with you, Miss Liz; will it hindeed! An' it will cry an' fret with its hown mother; will it hindeed!" And at every sentence she approached Liz more nearly, increasing in fury as she advanced. "Yer low hussey! D'ye think I'd let yer 'ave my babby for a hour unless yer paid for't? As it is yer pays far too little. I'm a honest woman as works for my livin' 'an wot drinks reasonable, better than you by a long sight, with your stuck-up airs! A pretty drab *you* are! Gi' me the babby; ye an't no business to keep it a minit longer;" and she made a grab at Liz's sheltering shawl.

"Oh, don't hurt it!" pleaded Liz tremblingly. "Such a little thing; don't hurt it!"

Mother Mawks stared so wildly that her blood-shot eyes seemed protruding from her head.

"'Urt it! Hain't I a right to do wot I likes with my hown babby! 'Urt it! Well I never! Look 'ere!" and she turned round on the assembled neighbours. "Haint she a reglar one! She don't care for the law, not she! She's keepin' back a child from its hown mother!" And with that she made a fierce attack on the shawl and succeeded in dragging the infant from Liz's reluctant arms. Wakened thus roughly from its slumbers, the poor mite set up a feeble wailing; its mother, enraged at the sound, shook it violently till it gasped for breath.

"Drat the little beast!" she cried. "Why don't it choke an' 'ave done with it!"

And without heeding the terrified remonstrances of Liz she flung the child roughly, as though it were a ball, through the open door of her lodging, where it fell on a heap of dirty clothes, and lay motionless; its wailing had ceased.

"Oh, baby, baby!" exclaimed Liz in accents of poignant distress. "Oh! you have killed it I am sure! Oh, you are cruel, cruel! Oh, baby, baby!"

And she broke into a tempestuous passion of sobs and tears. The bystanders looked on in unmoved silence. Mother Mawks gathered her torn garments round her with a gesture of defiance, and sniffed the air as though she said, "Any one who wants to meddle with me will get the worst of it." There was a brief pause; suddenly a man staggered out of the gin-shop, smearing the back of his hand across his mouth as he came,—a massively-built, ill-favoured brute with a shock of uncombed red hair and small ferret-like eyes. He stared stupidly at the weeping Liz, then at Mother Mawks, finally from one to the other of the loafers who stood by. "Wot's the row?" he demanded thickly, "Wot's up? 'Ave it out fair! Joe Mawks'll stand by an' see fair game. Fire away, my hearties! fire, fire away!" And with a chuckling idiot laugh he dived into the pocket of his torn corduroy trousers and produced a pipe. Filling this leisurely from a greasy pouch, with such unsteady fingers that the tobacco dropped all over him, he lit it, repeating

with increased thickness of utterance "Wot's the row? 'Ave it out fair!"

"It's about your babby, Joe!" cried the girl before-mentioned, jumping up from her seat on the ground with such force that her hair came tumbling all about her in a dark dank mist through which her thin eager face spitefully peered, "Liz has gone crazy! She wants your babby to cuddle!" And she screamed with sudden laughter, "Eh, eh! fancy! Wants a babby to cuddle!"

The stupefied Joe blinked drowsily and sucked the stem of his pipe with apparent relish. Then as if he had been engaged in deep meditation on the subject, he removed his smoky consoler from his mouth and said, "W'y not? Wants a babby to cuddle? All right! Let 'er 'ave it—w'y not?"

At these words Liz looked up hopefully through her tears, but Mother Mawks darted forward in raving indignation.

"Yer great drunken fool!" she yelled to her besotted spouse, "aren't yer ashamed of yerself? Wot! Let out yer babby a whole night for nuthin'? It's lucky I've got my wits about me; an' I say Liz *shan't* 'ave it! There now!"

The man looked at her and a dogged resolution darkened his repulsive countenance. He raised his big fist, clenched it, and hit straight out, giving his infuriated wife a black eye in much less than a minute. "An' I say she *shall* 'ave it! Wheer are ye now?"

In answer to this query Mother Mawks might have said that she was "all there," for she returned her husband's blow with interest and force, and in a couple of seconds the happy pair were engaged in a "stand-up" fight, to the intense admiration and excitement of all the inhabitants of the little alley. Every one in the place thronged to watch the combatants and to hear the blasphemous oaths and curses with which the battle was accompanied. In the midst of the affray, a wizened, bent old man, who had been sitting at his door sorting rags in a basket, and apparently taking no heed of the clamour around him, made a sign to Liz.

"Take the kid now," he whispered. "Nobody'll notice. I'll see they don't come arter ye." Liz thanked him mutely by a look, and rushing to the house where the child still lay, seemingly inanimate, on the floor among the soiled clothes, she caught it up eagerly and hurried away to her own poor garret in a tumble-down tenement at the furthest end of the alley. The infant had been stunned by its fall, but under her tender care, and rocked in the warmth of her caressing arms, it soon recovered, though when its blue eyes opened they were full of a bewildered pain such as may be seen in the eyes of a shot bird.

"My pet! my poor little darling!" she murmured over and over again, kissing its wee white face and soft hands; "I wish I was your mother—Lord knows I do! As it is you're all I've got to care for. And you do love me, baby, don't you? just a little,

little bit!" And as she renewed her fondling embraces, the tiny, sad-visaged creature uttered a low crooning sound of baby satisfaction in response to her endearments—a sound more sweet to her ears than the most exquisite music, and which brought a smile to her mouth and a pathos to her dark eyes, rendering her face for the moment almost beautiful. Holding the child closely to her breast, she looked cautiously out of her narrow window, and perceived that the connubial fight was over. From the shouts of laughter and plaudits that reached her ears Joe Mawks had evidently won the day; his wife had disappeared from the field. She saw the little crowd dispersing, most of those who composed it entering the gin-shop, and very soon the alley was comparatively quiet and deserted. By-and-by she heard her name called in a low voice: "Liz! Liz!"

She looked down and saw the old man who had promised her his protection in case Mother Mawks should persecute her. "Is that you, Jim? Come upstairs, it's better than talking out there." He obeyed, and stood before her in the wretched room, looking curiously both at her and the baby. A wiry, wolfish-faced being was Jim Duds, as he was familiarly called, though his own name was the aristocratic and singularly inappropriate one of James Douglas; he was more like an animal than a human creature, with his straggling grey hair, bushy beard, and sharp teeth protruding like fangs from beneath his upper lip. His profession was that of an area-thief, and he considered it a sufficiently respectable calling.

"Mother Mawks has got it this time," he said with a grin which was more like a snarl. "Joe's blood was up an' he pounded her nigh into a jelly. She'll leave ye quiet now; so long as ye pay the hire reg'lar ye'll have Joe on yer side. If so be as there's a bad day, ye'd better not come home at all."

"I know," said Liz, "but she's always had the money for the child, and surely it wasn't much to ask her to let me keep it warm on such a cold night as this."

Jim Duds looked meditative. "Wot makes ye care for that babby so much?" he asked. "'Tain't yourn."

Liz sighed.

"No!" she said sadly. "That's true. But it seems something to hold on to like. See what my life has been!" She stopped and a wave of colour flushed her pallid features. "From a little girl, nothing but the streets—the long cruel streets! and I just a bit of dirt on the pavement—no more; flung here, flung there, and at last swept into the gutter. All dark—all useless!" She laughed a little. "Fancy, Jim! I've never seen the country!"

"Nor I," said Jim, biting a piece of straw reflectively. "It must be powerful fine, with nought but green trees an' posies a' blowin' an' a' growin' everywheres. There ain't many kitching areas there though, I'm told."

Liz went on, scarcely heeding him: "The baby seems to me like what the country must be—all harmless and sweet and quiet; when I hold it so, my heart gets peaceful somehow,—I don't know why."

Again Jim looked speculative. He waved his bitten straw expressively.

"Ye've had 'sperience, Liz. Haint ye met no man like, wot ye could care fur?"

Liz trembled and her eyes grew wild.

"Men!" she cried with bitterest scorn—"no *men* have come my way, only brutes!"

Jim stared, but was silent; he had no fit answer ready. Presently Liz spoke again more softly:

"Jim, do you know I went into a great church to-day?"

"Worse luck!" said Jim sententiously. "Church ain't no use nohow as fur as I can see."

"There was a figure there, Jim," went on Liz, earnestly, "of a Woman holding up a Baby, and people knelt down before it. What do you s'pose it was?"

"Can't say!" replied the puzzled Jim. "Are ye sure 'twas a church? Most like 'twas a moo'seum."

"No, no!" said Liz. "'Twas a church for certain; there were folks praying in it."

"Ah well!" growled Jim, gruffly, "much good may it do 'em! I'm not of the prayin' sort. A woman an' a babby, did ye say? Don't ye get such cranky notions into yer head, Liz! Women 'an babbies are common enough—too common by a long chalk, an' as for prayin' to 'em——" Jim's utter contempt and incredulity were too great for further expression, and he turned away, wishing her a curt "Good-night!"

"Good-night!" said Liz, softly, and long after he had left her, she still sat silent, thinking, thinking, with the baby asleep in her arms, listening to the rain as it dripped, dripped, heavily, like clods falling on a coffin-lid. She was not a good woman—far from it. Her very motive in hiring the infant at so much a day was entirely inexcusable—it was simply to gain money upon false pretences, by exciting more pity than would otherwise have been bestowed on her had she begged for herself alone, without a child in her arms. At first she had carried the baby about to serve as a mere trick of her trade, but the warm feel of its little helpless body against her bosom day after day had softened her heart towards its innocence and pitiful weakness, and at last she had grown to love it with a strange, intense passion,—so much that she would willingly have sacrificed her life for its sake. She knew that its own parents cared nothing for it, except for the money it brought them through her hands, and often wild plans would form in her poor tired brain,—plans of running away with it altogether from the roaring, devouring city, to some sweet humble country

village, there to obtain work, and devote herself to making this one little child happy. Poor Liz! Poor, bewildered, heart-broken Liz! Ignorant London heathen as she was, there was one fragrant flower blossoming in the desert of her soiled and wasted existence—the flower of a pure and guileless love for one of those “little ones” of whom it hath been said by an All-Pitying Divinity unknown to her: “Suffer them to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The dreary winter days crept on apace and as they drew near Christmas, dwellers in the streets leading off the Strand grew accustomed of nights to hear the plaintive voice of a woman, singing in a peculiarly thrilling and pathetic manner, some of the old songs and ballads familiar and dear to the heart of every Englishman.—“The Banks of Allan Water,” “The Bailiff’s Daughter,” “Sally in our Alley,” “The Last Rose of Summer;” all these well-loved ditties she sang one after the other, and though her notes were neither fresh nor powerful they were true and often tender, more particularly in the hackneyed but still captivating melody of “Home, sweet Home.” Windows were opened and pennies freely showered on the street-vocalist, who was accompanied in all her wanderings by a fragile infant, which she seemed to carry with especial care and tenderness. Sometimes too, in the bleak afternoons, she would be seen wending her way through mud and mire, setting her weary face against the bitter east wind, and patiently singing on,—and motherly women coming from the gay shops and stores where they had been purchasing Christmas toys for their own children would often stop to look at the baby’s pinched white features with pity, and would say, while giving their spare pennies, “Poor little thing! Is it not very ill?” And Liz, her heart freezing with sudden terror, would exclaim hurriedly, “Oh, no, no! It is always pale, it is just a little bit weak, that’s all!” And the kindly questioners, touched by the large despair of her dark eyes, would pass on and say no more. And Christmas came—the birthday of the Child-Christ—a feast, the sacred meaning of which was unknown to Liz; she only recognized it as a sort of large and somewhat dull bank-holiday, when all London devoted itself to church-going and the eating of roast beef and plum pudding. The whole thing was incomprehensible to her mind,—but even her sad countenance was brighter than usual on Christmas Eve and she felt almost gay, for had she not, by means of a little extra starvation on her own part, been able to buy a wondrous gold and crimson worsted bird suspended from an elastic string, a bird which bobbed up and down to command in the most lively and artistic manner? And had not her hired baby actually laughed at the clumsy toy?—laughed an elfish and weird little laugh, the first it had ever indulged in? And Liz had laughed too, for pure gladness in the child’s mirth,

and the worsted bird became a sort of uncouth charm to make them both merry.

But after Christmas had come and gone, and the melancholy days, the last beatings of the failing pulse of the Old Year throbbed slowly and heavily away, the baby took upon its wan visage a strange expression,—the expression of worn-out and suffering age. Its blue eyes grew more solemnly speculative and dreamy, and after a while it seemed to lose all taste for the petty things of this world and the low desires of mere humanity. It lay very quiet in Liz's arms; it never cried, and was no longer fretful, and it seemed to listen with a sort of mild approval to the tones of her voice as they rang out in the dreary streets through which, by day and night, she patiently wandered. By-and-by the worsted bird, too, fell out of favour; it jumped and glittered in vain; the baby surveyed it with an unmoved air of superior wisdom,—just as if it had suddenly found out what real birds were like, and was not to be deceived into accepting so poor an imitation of Nature. Liz grew uneasy, but she had no one in whom to confide her fears. She had been very regular in her payments to Mother Mawks, and that irate lady, kept in order by her bull-dog of a husband, had been of late very contented to let her have the child without further interference. Liz knew well enough that no one in the miserable alley where she dwelt would care whether the baby were ill or not. They would tell her, "the more sickly the better for your trade." Besides, she was jealous,—she could not endure the idea of any one touching or tending it but herself. Children were often ailing, she thought, and if left to themselves without doctor's stuff, they recovered sometimes more quickly than they had sickened. Thus soothing her inward tremors as best she might, she took more care than ever of her frail charge, stinting herself that she might nourish it, though the baby seemed to care less and less for mundane necessities, and only submitted to be fed, as it were, under patient and silent protest.

And so the sands in Time's hour-glass ran slowly but surely away, and it was New Year's Eve. Liz had wandered about all day singing her little *répertoire* of ballads in the teeth of a cruel, snow-laden wind—so cruel, that people, otherwise charitably disposed, had shut close their doors and windows, and had not even heard her voice. Thus the last span of the Old Year had proved most unprofitable and dreary; she had gained no more than sixpence; how could she return with only that humble amount to face Mother Mawks and her vituperative fury? Her throat ached—she was very tired, and as the night darkened from pale to deep and starless shadows, she strolled mechanically from the Strand to the Embankment, and after walking some little distance she sat down in a corner close to Cleopatra's Needle,—that mocking obelisk that has looked upon the decay of empires, itself impassive, and that still appears

to say, "Pass on, ye puny generations! I, a mere carven block of stone, shall outlive you all!" For the first time in all her experience the child in her arms seemed a heavy burden. She put aside her shawl and surveyed it tenderly; it was fast asleep, a small, peaceful smile on its thin quiet face. Thoroughly worn-out herself, she leaned her head against the damp stone wall behind her, and clasping the infant tightly to her breast, she also slept,—the heavy dreamless sleep of utter fatigue and physical exhaustion. The solemn night moved on, a night of black vapours; the pageant of the Old Year's death-bed was unbrightened by so much as a single star. None of the hurrying passers-by perceived the weary woman where she slept in that obscure corner, and for a long while she rested there undisturbed. Suddenly a vivid glare of light dazzled her eyes; she started to her feet half-asleep, but still instinctively retaining the infant in her close embrace. A dark form, buttoned to the throat, and holding a brilliant bull's eye lantern, stood before her.

"Come now," said this personage, "this won't do! Move on!"

Liz smiled, faintly and apologetically.

"All right!" she answered striving to speak cheerfully and raising her eyes to the policeman's good-natured countenance, "I didn't mean to fall asleep here. I don't know how I came to do it. I must go home of course."

"Of course!" said the policeman, somewhat mollified by her evident humility, and touched in spite of himself by the pathos of her eyes. Then turning his lamp more fully upon her, he continued "Is that a baby you've got there?"

"Yes," said Liz, half proudly, half tenderly. "Poor little dear! it's been ailing sadly,—but I think it's better now than it was." And encouraged by his friendly tone, she opened the folds of her shawl to show him her one treasure. The bull's eye came into still closer requisition, as the kindly guardian of the peace peered inquiringly at the tiny bundle. He had scarcely looked when he started back with an exclamation:

"God bless my soul!" he cried, "it's dead!"

"*Dead!*" shrieked Liz, "Oh, no, no! Not *dead!* Don't say so, oh, don't, *don't* say so! Oh, you *can't* mean it! Oh, for God's love say you didn't mean it! It can't be dead, not really *dead*, no, no indeed! Oh, baby, baby! You are not dead, my pet, my angel, not *dead*, oh no!"

And breathless, frantic with fear, she felt the little thing's hands and feet and face, kissed it wildly and called it by a thousand endearing names, in vain—in vain! Its tiny body was already stiff and rigid; it had been a corpse more than two hours.

The policeman coughed, and brushed his thick gauntlet glove across his eyes. He was an emissary of the law, but he had a heart. He thought of his bright-eyed wife at home, and of the

soft-cheeked cuddling little creature that clung to her bosom and crowed with rapture whenever he came near.

"Look here," he said very gently, laying one hand on the woman's shoulder as she crouched shivering against the wall and staring piteously at the motionless waxen form in her arms, "It's no use fretting about it." He paused,—there was an uncomfortable lump in his throat and he had to cough again to get it down. "The poor little creature's gone,—there's no help for it. The next world's a better place than this, you know! there, there! don't take on so about it,"—this as Liz shuddered and sighed—a sigh of such complete despair that it went straight to his honest soul and showed him how futile were his efforts at consolation. But he had his duty to attend to and he went on in firmer tones. "Now, like a good woman, you just move off from here and go home. If I leave you here by yourself a bit, will you promise me to go straight home? I mustn't find you here when I come back on this beat, d'ye understand?" Liz nodded. "That's right!" he resumed cheerily, "I'll give you just ten minutes; you just go straight home."

And with a "Good-night," uttered in accents meant to be comforting, he turned away and paced on, his measured tread echoing on the silence at first loudly, then fainter and fainter, till it altogether died away, as his bulky figure disappeared in the distance. Left to herself, Liz rose from her crouching posture; rocking the dead child in her arms, she smiled. "Go straight home!" she murmured half aloud, "Home, sweet home! Yes, baby; yes, my darling, we will go home together!" And creeping cautiously along in the shadows she reached a flight of the broad stone steps leading down to the river. She descended them one by one; the black water lapped against them heavily, heavily; the tide was full up. She paused; a sonorous deep-toned iron voice rang through the air with reverberating, solemn melody. It was the great bell of St. Paul's tolling midnight,—the Old Year was dead. "Straight home!" she repeated with a beautiful expectant look in her wild, weary eyes. "My little darling! Yes, we are both tired, we will go home! Home, sweet Home! We will go!"

Kissing the cold face of the baby corpse she held, she threw herself forward; there followed a sullen deep splash—a slight struggle—and all was over! The water lapped against the steps heavily, heavily as before; the policeman passed once more, and saw to his satisfaction that the coast was clear; through the dark veil of the sky one star looked out and twinkled for a brief instant, then disappeared again. A clash and clamour of bells startled the brooding night:—here and there a window was opened and figures appeared in balconies to listen. They were ringing in the New Year,—the festival of hope, the birthday of the world! But what were New Years to her, who with white upturned face and arms that embraced an infant in the tenacious grip of death, went

drifting, drifting, solemnly down the dark river, unseen, unpitied of all those who awoke to new hopes and aspirations on that first morning of another life-probation! Liz had gone—gone to make her peace with God—perhaps through the aid of her “hired” baby—the little sinless soul she had so fondly cherished, gone to that sweetest “home” we dream of and pray for, where the lost and bewildered wanderers on this earth shall find true welcome and rest from grief and exile,—gone to that fair, far Glory-World where reigns the Divine Master whose words still ring above the tumult of ages: “See that you despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that their Angels do always behold the face of My Father who is in Heaven!”

THE DUKE OF MELTON:

A STORY IN TWO PARTS.

By LADY VIRGINIA SANDARS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIRESS OF HAREDALE," ETC.

PART I.

FEW events could have created greater consternation in the fashionable world than the startling intelligence that the Duke of Melton's yacht, with all on board, including her noble owner and his only son and heir, had perished in one of those fearful storms which occasionally, in early spring, lash the blue but treacherous Mediterranean into the wildest fury.

When the fatal news reached England, the voice of lamentation was heard in many a bereaved home. But though universally popular, the unfortunate duke had no near relatives to bewail his untimely end and that of the delicate son, for whose health this ill-fated expedition had been undertaken.

After the excitement caused by the duke's tragic end had somewhat subsided, which was in about twenty-four hours, every one asked his neighbours, "Who is the heir?" The duke had many cousins, some in the army, some in the navy, one a bishop; but that none of these were his successor was clear from the languid interest they evinced in an event creating such commotion in the great world.

When applied to by the lawyers for information respecting the actual heir, they replied they were personally unacquainted with him, but believed he was in Thibet or Central Africa, in search of the sources of unknown rivers or extinct tribes. Always eccentric, he had become more so, they heard, of late years, and had given up all idea of ever returning to England. In despair the lawyers despatched a letter to Major Selmar, now Duke of Melton, under cover to the colonel of his late regiment, stationed in India, with whom they discovered the major still kept up social relations.

Here, on his return from a long expedition, made in company with his friend, Captain Merrivale, Selmar received the astounding intelligence that he had become Duke of Melton. At first he ridiculed the news, ascribing it to a hoax of his old regiment, famous for its practical jokes; but when he could no longer doubt

the truth of his changed fortunes, he fell into a state of the deepest depression, and it was only through the persuasions of his friend, Oliver Merrivale, that the new duke could be induced to make preparations for his homeward journey; and then only because Captain Merrivale was returning to England on long leave. Therefore the two men, who were fast friends, were enabled to travel together.

"My dear Oliver," said the new-made duke in melancholy accents, "unless you were accompanying me I should never have courage to face England. It is a hard case that a man should become a duke whether he likes it or not."

"Pooh! pooh! my dear fellow," replied his friend, "you will sing to a very different tune by-and-by. At present you are decidedly hipped. I wish I was standing in your shoes. By Jove! wouldn't I have a fine time of it."

"I am sure I wish you were in my position. I declare I feel exactly as though I was going to attend my own funeral."

"And so require me as chief mourner, Sel—— I beg your pardon, duke."

"Oh! please call me Selmar still, and then I shall not feel as if my old self was quite so dead. And this is no laughing matter. Remember, I don't know a soul in England. That unfortunate affair which drove me from it has left me perfectly friendless in my native country. I have no near relatives, except a blind uncle. I can't even boast of having a lawyer, a person most people seem to have some pride in alluding to."

"Ah! ah! old fellow, he won't be long in offering his services; and as to friends—as soon as you shine on the world in the halo of your prosperity, like mushrooms they will spring up in a single night. Then think of the girls! How *they* will smile upon you. Why, you can throw the handkerchief to whom you choose."

"Ah! if *she* had only proved faithful. I could now give her everything the heart of woman could desire."

Here Selmar heaved a tremendous sigh to a completely extinct sentiment.

"And much *she* would have merited such good fortune! Out on such a sordid *she*, say I," exclaimed Oliver indignantly.

"Well, I shall never marry now," replied his friend gloomily.

"May I inquire why you are vowed to celibacy? for I have too much respect for your good sense to credit the idea of your heart being eternally blighted," drily responded the other.

"Perhaps you are right," Selmar smiled; "but still I have a prejudice in favour of being married for myself rather than for what I represent. Women are so terribly mercenary. I have neither your good looks nor fascination, Oliver."

"Pooh! pooh! For a duke you are an Adonis, a fact of which the fair sex will soon convince you, my dear fellow."

"I am glad you think so. But all this is a closed chapter in

my life. What I now bemoan is the upsetting of all my plans of life by these most undesired strawberry leaves."

"Plan of life—bah!" contemptuously exclaimed Oliver; "what plan of life have you ever developed except that of the Wandering Jew? And I tell you frankly, Selmar, I am sick of the Jew life which I have hitherto shared with you. Buried cities, extinct tribes, cannibals and war paint, slaying of beasts—all these excitements have wholly ceased to have any attractions for me, and I have a fresh plan of life, rising in pleasing contrast to the past, namely, to sell out, find some sweet English girl to woo—eventually to wed—a houri with blue eyes and golden hair, for I now loathe the very sight of dark women. And my old aunt promises to leave me her whole fortune if I will only return to England and help to take care of her and her cats."

"In the fulfilment of which good intention I wish you all luck, Oliver, for as I am forced to remain in England, I shall be very glad to keep the only friend I have there also, and to see you steady down as a married man."

Here, utterly prostrated by the overpowering heat of the Red Sea, through which their ship was sullenly ploughing her way, the two men sank into dreamy silence, suddenly interrupted by the duke saying abruptly:

"Oliver, I wish you would change places with me for a space."

"With all the pleasure in life, my dear fellow. I fancy you do catch a little more breeze where I am. Pooh! how hot it is. I'm a Dutchman if I ever go through this purgatory again."

Captain Merrivale rose as he spoke, yawning lazily, stretching his magnificent and slenderly-attired figure with weary indolence.

"No, no; stay where you are," laughed Selmar. "Get all the benefit you can from your ideal breeze; there's a great deal in imagination. And I allude to a much more important change. You assert you would like to stand in my shoes. Supposing you make the trial for a few weeks—say till Parliament meets—and give me the benefit (by assuming your name) of ascertaining my true value in that new world into which, *nolens volens*, I am constrained to launch myself?"

"So Quixotic and hopelessly impossible an idea could only have originated in your eccentric brain, Selmar. And as you don't intend to go in for matrimony, why on earth should you care what the world thinks of you? Whatever it thinks, rest assured you will, as Duke of Melton, equally receive its adulation and worship."

"Exactly what I fear. And therefore, if you fall in with my sudden inspiration, I get a chance of coming across some fair girl who may love me for myself—find a wife who marries the man as well as the duke."

"So your broken heart is really mended, Selmar, after all?" laughingly rejoined Merrivale.

"Completely, my dear fellow. But I have a shrinking dread of being again deceived. And I have thought out a plan, which will at first, I have no doubt, appear absurd to you. Yet nothing is easier than for us to assume each other's characters for a short time, as at the family place whither I am bound not a soul knows either of us."

"Impracticable," replied Oliver dubiously. "Yet," he continued reflectively, "even for a few weeks it would be a pleasant novelty to bask in the sunshine of your prosperity. But mind, I expect all its emoluments. No empty dukedoms for me. On this point our understanding must be clear."

"Certainly. And during your regency you can settle with all your creditors in full. And they are not a few, I fancy."

"Then, by Jove! I accept," cried Oliver joyfully. "And really you have so often aided me to escape the chains of matrimony that, upon my word, as you desire it, it becomes a positive duty on my part to help you into its fetters. Hurrah! I am now a duke, I'll thank you to remember."

When Major Selmar had, some twelve years previously, quitted England it was with the firm determination of never returning. Ruined in fortune by his father in speculations closely treading on dishonour, the woman he loved, when fickle Fortune had deserted him, followed in her wake, and Selmar arrived in India with as he deemed a broken heart—a figment in which he indulged long after contempt had cured him of every vestige of soft feeling for his faithless love. But though his heart's wound soon healed, the blow which had struck at his honour through a father's disgrace rankled long and intensely, and it was with feelings of deepest gratitude that he had accepted from the late duke a commission in a regiment bound for foreign service. Selmar was popular in his regiment, for he was an honourable and brave man, though decidedly eccentric, and perhaps, from constant brooding over his past, a little selfish. In outward appearance he was not without some personal advantages. His eyes were pleasant, his mouth good, especially when brightened by one of his rare smiles, his nose—well, his nose was nothing very remarkable for an ordinary mortal, but for a duke it was perfect. Then his figure, though not cast in such perfect proportions as Captain Merrivale's, denoted greater athletic strength, and he could boast of having slain more lions and tigers than any man in India. Indeed, the friendship between Selmar and Oliver had originated in Selmar having rescued the latter, at risk of his own life, from a tiger's claws. And their friendship had been still further cemented by the many tender scrapes out of which the susceptible captain had been dragged by his friend.

Pre-eminently handsome and fascinating, Oliver, who was a desperate flirt, had the unhappy knack of inspiring the temporary object of his affections with a much more enduring passion than

his own ever proved to be. But having given out that he was too poor to indulge in the expensive luxury of a wife, he considered that if some fair one gave too much heed to his honeyed words, this warning exonerated him of all blame. About the gallant captain's looks there could be no two opinions. He had the face and figure of an Apollo, a boyish manner, soft laugh, and oh! such dangerous "heart-devouring" eyes, as one of his victims observed when discussing with a fellow-sufferer the too seductive Oliver's perfections.

Arrived at Melton Abbey, and having taken agent and lawyer into their confidence, the two friends quietly dropped into their assumed positions, Oliver receiving with laughing impudent grace the ovation prepared for the duke, his gay address and handsome person winning golden opinions from all, while the real potentate, sunk into insignificance, was privately occupied with his agent in the serious details of business incident to his position. Though it was known no entertainments would take place at the Abbey until after Christmas, owing to the late duke's tragic end, the Abbey was soon assailed by cards and visitors in shoals.

Notably amongst the former were to be seen those of the Dowager Viscountess Lodore and her three daughters, the Hon. Iris, Daphne, and Hyacinth Parkhurst, the acknowledged beauties of the county, popular, undeniably lovely and amiable, and with well-earned reputations of being outrageous flirts.

Lady Lodore was a widow, but slenderly dowered. When she could let her pretty country residence she migrated to London, in the maternal hope of there mating her handsome daughters. But whether she played her cards too openly, or the young ladies flirted too audaciously, thereby alarming those they most wished to attract, the result was the same—the Misses Parkhurst still retained their maiden names. Not that they did not wish to change them, for they were all equally weary of poverty, humiliating economies and self-made finery! But of what use marrying, they asked, if drudgery and lack of all the æsthetic graces of life were still to be their portion, accompanied perhaps by loss of looks and abstinence from flirtation? Indeed, Hyacinth, the youngest and far the most lovely of the sisters, when one day engaged in the arduous task of packing (which she detested), had declared, as she struggled with a refractory trunk, which refused to close, though both her well-developed sisters were sitting on it, "That if the oldest and ugliest man in the realm were to propose to her when thus engaged, she would unhesitatingly accept him—if only he were rich."

Yet, notwithstanding this bold assertion, the sisters had entered into a solemn compact that, though they would never marry a poor man, neither would they accept any one they could not love. And only a short time previous to the duke's arrival, Hyacinth

had refused the richest *parti* in the county, Sir Richard Bankwell, because he did not fulfil the requirements her heart demanded.

"You are quite right, darling," said Iris, who adored her youngest sister. "You are only twenty, the most beautiful of us all, and must give yourself another chance. It is a pity Sir Richard did not fix his affections upon me. Awful thought, I am thirty to-day, and getting very tired of boys."

It was at this critical juncture of the Misses Parkhursts' destinies that the duke appeared on the tapis, brightening into more solid hope their hitherto fruitless matrimonial speculations.

Great was the excitement at the Dower House. Discreet inquiries were made, peerages were closely studied to discover his age. He was thirty-eight, consequently suitable for any of the sisters. Having freely discussed the matter—amiable to each other even in the important matter of lovers—they agreed that from the moment the duke displayed a decided preference for one of their number the others would retire into the background. The great thing for them was to be first in the field, and thus prevent this great prize from straying to other ground. If the duke hunted they were sure of success, for in the hunting field the sisters were without a rival. Therefore it was with infinite gratification that the Misses Parkhurst listened with more than ordinary attention as the careworn viscountess said one morning at breakfast, with ill-concealed agitation, "Iris, have you heard that the duke invites no guests to the Abbey until after Christmas?"

"Yes, mamma, we have heard the doleful news," replied stately Iris.

"And talked of nothing else ever since; I am sick of the word 'duke,'" said a pretty piquante brunette, whose dark hair and clear olive complexion testified to her being of different parentage to the golden-haired sisters. She was Lady Lodore's niece, temporarily staying beneath her aunt's roof.

"I am sorry you are sick of the duke's name, Kate, for I have invited him here," observed Lady Lodore with emphatic calm.

"You have asked him here?" exclaimed the sisters in a chorus of breathless admiration at their mother's courageous audacity.

"I have so deemed it my duty," replied the viscountess with dignity, adding carelessly, "It is only an act of simple courtesy. Being a bachelor he is naturally living in a state of the greatest discomfort, the late duke's establishment having been dispersed."

"But has he accepted?" eagerly demanded the chorus.

"Why should he not?" grandly demanded Lady Lodore. "He has accepted my invitation, and in the most gracious manner. But there you are, as usual, all talking together. This odious habit has, I am sure, lost you many husbands."

"Well, aunty, my cousins could only marry one man—at least at a time."

The viscountess cast a severe glance at her niece, withering

pretty Kate into silence, while she continued with solemn irritability :

"I am aware how little my daughters value any advice proceeding from my lips, still I trust that for once they will give heed to my counsels, and previous to the duke's arrival, will settle amongst themselves who is to do the agreeable to him."

"Oh! we have arranged all that, mamma," said Iris, glancing with a loving smile at her blue-eyed sister Hyacinth.

"If I might be allowed an opinion," continued the dowager with increased solemnity, "I should say Daphne has the best right to be put forward on this occasion. You, Iris, have had longer opportunities. And as Hyacinth—the mother's voice rose reproachfully—has seen fit to refuse the richest *parti* in the county——" Here Lady Lodore suddenly broke off in her peroration, exclaiming, "Good gracious, Daphne, there is that disfiguring spot again appeared on your nose! Why—why will it always come when I most wish you to look your best?" she cried in tones of despair.

"You had better ask my nose, mamma. I did not invite the spot," rather sullenly answered poor Daphne.

"Put a black patch on it, Daphy," said Kate laughing.

"To attract greater attention to the offending blemish," replied Daphne with a smile and quickly restored good-humour.

"Had it been anywhere else she might have put on a patch, they are very becoming," observed Lady Lodore with reflective mournfulness.

The girls all laughed merrily, and Kate in consoling accents observed, "Don't fret, aunty, Daphne's nose will be all right before the great man arrives."

"He comes to-morrow," was the despairing answer.

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the sisters, completely taken aback.

"Hurrah! cousins, now for your feathers and war paint," cried Kate, waving a very pretty little hand in the air. "I back you, dear Cynthy," she whispered, putting her arm round Hyacinth's waist.

"Ah! Kate, it is my week for housekeeping. Fancy the toil of unusual hospitality! I almost wish he was not coming," sighed Hyacinth.

At the Abbey Oliver was beginning to chafe beneath the splendours of his borrowed plumage. For the duke, absorbed in business, could devote little time to his friend's amusement. Therefore it was with no small satisfaction that he hailed the opportunity of change and excitement offered by Lady Lodore's invitation.

Her note was delivered to Oliver by a valet lately taken into the duke's service but not into his confidence. Tossing it across the table to Selmar, Oliver said, "What do you say to accepting this invitation? I hear the girls are perfectly lovely—amusing and

rather fast; we might have some fun. It is confoundedly slow here, and I am heartily sick of the weight of your strawberry leaves."

Oliver yawned furiously as he spoke.

"And you look forward to indulging in your favourite pastime, Oliver?" observed Selmar gravely. "I fear it is dull for you here at present. But remember, if I accept this invitation, you cannot, in your present situation, indulge in the slightest approximation to flirtation without bringing discredit on both yourself and me."

"It would certainly be rather awkward if one of these hours fell in love with your humble servant; but only accept, and I promise not to be too irresistible. And who knows but that amongst those beauties you may not stumble on your future duchess?"

Selmar smiled rather contemptuously, saying:

"For your sake, and yours only, I fling myself among strangers. But mind, my eyes will be ever watching you."

"As a cat watches a mouse?" laughed Oliver.

"Precisely."

A few days later the duke and Oliver, leaving valet and luggage to follow, walked leisurely over to the Dower House after their day's shooting. The former was in unusually bright spirits, whereas Oliver was taciturn, not to say a little sulky.

As the two men turned into Lady Lodore's well-kept approach, the cloud overhanging Oliver's brow darkened still further, and he suddenly burst out, saying:

"I wish you would release me from this ridiculous position in which you have inveigled me, Selmar. If these young ladies are as beautiful as represented, I know I can't trust myself. I know I can't."

"In other words, Oliver, you mean to say that even to oblige your best friend you are unable to abstain from your contemptible weakness for a few weeks."

The duke spoke with withering scorn.

"Don't be hard on a fellow, Selmar. I am but flesh and blood after all. Mine is an amiable weakness. I am not made of marble, but of the most malleable clay. I am impressionable, Selmar, very. Suppose I fall in love?"

"Suppose the moon is made of green cheese," contemptuously replied the duke.

"I only say suppose, Selmar. I wish to provide for contingencies."

"Well, if you find your heart's citadel giving tokens of weakness, raise the siege and fly temptation like a man."

"And supposing—mind, I am still only supposing—the girl falls in love with me? What then? Are we to fly together, as you so airily propose, for her to discover she has taken flight with a scoundrel instead of a duke?"

"There's no fear of such a catastrophe where a man of honour

is concerned," replied Selmar grandly. "And indeed, my dear Oliver, a little abstinence from flirtation will serve as a tonic to strengthen your character."

"I am glad you think so. But I beg you to remember that tonics are apt to increase the malady they are intended to cure, if indulged in too long. And so I trust the choice of your future duchess will not be unnecessarily prolonged."

Here a dismal and prolonged howl caused both men to equally arrest their steps and conversation. But they quickly discovered the doleful sounds to proceed from a rabbit hole, in which a small dog was imprisoned.

Regardless of Oliver's warnings that they would be late for dinner, the duke, devoted to animals, set to work to release the prisoner, and soon a starving little skye-terrier lay panting in his arms.

"You are in luck, Selmar," rather jealously observed Oliver. "Depend upon it, this dog is a pet of one of the Misses Parkhurst. What a glorious opening for courtship!"

In the pretty drawing-room of the Dower House, attired on this most important day in seductively becoming tea-gowns, sat Lady Lodore and the expectant duchesses, awaiting in feverish excitement the arrival of their guests. Captain Merrivale had been but cursorily alluded to by the viscountess "as a friend staying with the duke, and whom consequently she was forced to invite also."

It was the witching hour of five o'clock tea. The carefully shaded lamps shed a most becoming radiance over the sirens arrayed for conquest. Stately Iris, presiding over the tea table, looked a very Juno in crimson and black lace. Daphne, whose nose was—thanks to a little chalk, for the girls never powdered—restored to its pristine beauty, appeared a perfect harmony in azure blue and silver, while the lovely Hyacinth was a dream of beauty in virgin white.

What these perfect costumes—entirely the production of their own brains and hands—had cost the wearers in labour and thought, to say nothing of their mother's black satin, was known only to themselves.

Surely such a combination of talent and industry deserved to be crowned with success.

The time had long passed at which the visitors ought to have arrived, and a nervous silence, engendered by protracted waiting, had stolen over all the ladies. Every surmise as to the duke's tastes and habits had been exhausted. Of his personal advantages the young ladies were fully assured. For had they not seen him in church, and decided at once that the Adonis gracing the ducal pew could be no other than its owner? Upon his friend they bestowed no second thought, having at first sight dubbed him insignificant-looking and second-rate.

Breaking a silence which had remained undisturbed some minutes, Lady Lodore, glancing at her two younger daughters, observed plaintively:

"I do wish, girls, you would lay aside that horrible knitting."

Hyacinth and Daphne, who were both occupied with a crimson knickerbocker stocking, looked up and smiled.

"What will the duke say if he sees you thus occupied? You have no brothers, and the very colour of your wool betrays you are not employed for the poor," added the mother querulously.

"We cannot afford to lose old friends before we have made new ones, mamma," replied Hyacinth gaily. "These stockings are for Major Banger and Captain Smithers, who have so often given us a mount."

"Major Banger! Captain Smithers!" repeated Lady Lodore contemptuously. "Oh! what incorrigible flirts you are."

"So we acknowledge ourselves to be, mamma," said Hyacinth good-humouredly. "But good, honest, open flirts, who, when married, intend to entirely close the pleasant volume of flirtation, which will at first be sadly dull, I fear."

Here Hyacinth started, raising her hand to enjoin silence, while the sound of carriage wheels called all the ladies to attention, and Lady Lodore deftly seizing a stocking right and left from her refractory daughters' fingers, flung them beneath the sofa, saying angrily:

"I will be obeyed for once. Here is the duke!"

At the same moment the door flew violently open, and Kate rushed in, her pretty face crimson with excitement, her hair in wildest disorder, and her dress and hands soiled with earth, while in breathless words she exclaimed:

"Tiger is found! But oh! he is in a rabbit hole. Please send some one at once to dig him out, for I can't manage it."

Lady Lodore remained speechless from anger. But Iris, rising from the dignified pose she had assumed in expectancy of the duke's arrival, took poor little Kate by the shoulders and pushed her towards the door, saying authoritatively:

"For goodness sake, Kate, go and make yourself fit to be seen. Here is the duke."

Kate shook herself free from her cousin's grasp, replying irreverently:

"Bother the duke! Besides, it's not him; only his valet and things. And I won't go, but stay and disgrace you all, unless you promise at once to send some one to Tiger's help. What do I care for a hundred million dukes in comparison to the dog darling mamma gave me?" sobbed Kate passionately.

But her tears were quickly arrested at the sound of a feeble little bark in the passage, and in another moment the Duke of Melton and Major Selmar were announced (for it was decided the duke

should retain his original name, as he and Oliver were distantly related, and could term themselves cousins).

As they entered, with one bound Tiger sprang from his rescuer's arms into those of the enchanted Kate, who, unmindful of all present, covered him with kisses, while Lady Lodore and her daughters came forward and greeted their guests with the easy grace of well-bred women of the world.

"By Jove! they are divinities, and I am lost," mentally ejaculated Oliver, while aloud he gallantly observed, "I was told your daughters numbered the Graces, Lady Lodore, whom they so fitly represent, but I perceive that you have also a Hebe in your household."

He glanced at untidy Kate, who now that she held Tiger in her arms was beginning to feel rather crestfallen at her own appearance, but yet did not like to leave the room, wishing to see the fun.

"My niece, Miss Morden, duke; hardly out of the schoolroom," said Lady Lodore, hoping this might serve as an excuse for Kate's disorderly appearance.

"Then it was not one of the Misses Parkhursts' dog which you so gallantly rescued," said Oliver, addressing his friend, with as near an approach to a wink as he dared indulge in.

"Oh! I am so much obliged to you; more than words can express, Major Selmar," said Kate, coming out of her corner and offering with a deep blush her little earth-stained hand, which the duke took with a smile. He had experienced some disappointment on finding it was to this pretty child, and not to one of the stately beauties that he had done good service. But he felt fully rewarded as he looked into the depths of the liquid brown eyes raised so gratefully to his; and discovering that Kate had but lately returned from India, they soon had many topics in common, and being left quite in the cold by the other ladies, who were completely occupied with Oliver, the duke and Kate quickly became on friendly terms. She, with the sweet ingenuousness of extreme youth, confiding to him how she had lately left home and parents because the climate of India was injuring her health, and how, to comfort her at parting, darling mother had given her Tiger.

"And we love each other, don't we, Tiger, and talk together of mamma?" said the girl, stooping to kiss the dog on its head. When she looked up again her eyes were full of tears, and, much touched, the duke observed gently:

"Dogs are sometimes truer friends than human beings, Miss Morden."

Here Iris, reproaching herself for neglect of the duke's friend, inquired if he would not have some tea, and Kate slipping out of the room, he approached the table, where Oliver, intoxicated by an English freshness of beauty to which his eye had long been

unaccustomed, was conversing with guilty brilliancy, every resolution of not flirting melting away beneath the sunny glances of the fair sisters. Beautiful as they were, all three, he had quickly decided that Hyacinth was the most brilliant of this bright constellation.

In the meanwhile Lady Lodore was sitting on what is metaphorically termed thorns. For, hating to bide with idle fingers, and maintaining she could even talk better when occupied, Hyacinth, regardless of her mother's convulsive becks and frowns, had extracted her work from beneath the dark depths of the sofa, and was again busily knitting.

"You can have no conception how refreshing it is to see you occupied in such homely work. In India, our ladies are so enervated by the heat, they can do nothing but read novels," said Oliver in his softest voice, watching with admiration the clinking pins moving so rapidly in Hyacinth's slender white fingers. "What fortunate brothers are yours to have such kindly workers in their sisters," he whispered insinuatingly.

"We have no brothers, duke," replied Hyacinth demurely, glancing at her mother.

"Ah! you are even better employed? For charitable purposes, of course."

"Well, yes and no, for Captain Smithers, for whom my work is destined, is, I fear, not overburdened with this world's goods," replied Hyacinth with arch boldness.

"Happy Smithers!" whispered Oliver, inwardly wondering "who the deuce Smithers was," deciding he must be one of the innumerable adorers he had heard discussed in conjunction with the Misses Parkhurst.

But the thorns here becoming unbearable to Lady Lodore, she groaned audibly, causing Oliver to look round in astonishment, while the duke gave a loud admonitory cough, recalling his recalcitrant friend to order, and a few minutes later the whole party retired to prepare for dinner.

"Hyacinth, you will break my heart," almost sobbed Lady Lodore, as together they mounted the stairs.

"I should be sorry to do that, dear mamma," replied the girl coaxingly. "But depend upon it, I know my own business best; and I will never sail under false colours."

So saying, she kissed her mother and ran up to her room laughing. She thought the duke the handsomest man she had ever seen in her life, and the most fascinating.

DISDAINFUL DI.

By EVELINE MICHELL FARWELL.

CHAPTER I.

“NOW, Frank, get a good start, and let them see that a Douglas can still show 'em the way. Get the far side of the covert, he's pretty safe to break there, and it's nice open country, nothing to stop you. Give the mare her head, and she'll never put you down.”

Certainly, the big grey, with her sloping shoulders, grand quarters, and clean flat legs, looked good enough for most things—but what about the man? Frank Douglas sat his horse well enough, still there was an indescribable something which made one less sure of him than of Moonstone, but then horses are far easier to judge than men.

He was good enough to look at in his way, tall, well-built, with eyes which should redeem the plainest face, in the opinion of most women, and Frank's was anything but plain. His uncle was of a very different stamp, small, wiry, with quick keen eyes. Sitting in his saddle as though he grew there, General Douglas looked a sportsman all over, and although a slight attack of paralysis resulting from a sun-stroke in India, had robbed —shire of its best man to hounds, he still turned up at most meets, and saw more sport than many who were by way of going. He was a hardened old bachelor, and had just come home to settle at Douglas Court, intending to make Frank, who had been left an orphan at ten years old, his heir. He had seen little of him except during some summer holidays, when he had been home on leave, and had asked Frank to keep house with him at the Court. As a guardian he had been both generous and lenient, caring but little what work was done, either at Eton or Oxford.

“I don't want the lad to be a scholar,” he used to say; “as long as he's a gentleman and a horseman, I'm satisfied.”

As to horses, Frank had pretty nearly *carte blanche*; but his uncle didn't think a great deal of his stud when it arrived at the Court, and had insisted on Frank making his first appearance in —shire on old Moonstone, as fine a hunter as ever crossed a country. Look at her now, quivering with excitement as she listens for the music she knows and loves so well. She has not long to wait, for scarcely have hounds entered covert than there comes a whimper, swelling quickly into chorus, and they

crash out of the gorse well in the wake of as good a fox as ever saved his brush.

At the first sound, General Douglas had made for a lane running at right angles from the covert; galloping up this, followed by many of the field, he drew rein at the top, and saw the pack streaming along the valley below, while a field in front of them, a dark brown streak slipped through the fence. Several men and two ladies were well up, some in the same field with hounds, others a little to the left, but where was Frank? The general's eyes were good enough, and there was no mistaking Moonstone at any distance, but where the devil was she? Not in the first flight, nor yet in the second. Good heavens! *that* can't be Moonstone.

To the right of hounds a crowd of people jostling through a gate, and there, last of the jostlers, chafing and fretting her heart out, is a big grey. *Not* Moonstone? Yes! there—not sailing along, showing the way as a Douglas should, not even riding jealous with the few who mean going, but crushing with a hundred people through gates and gaps, the hundred and first is Frank Douglas. If the general swore a mighty oath, is it to be wondered at? Turning old Conundrum's head, he rode slowly homewards; perhaps it was well for Frank that he did so. The Douglas's were a hot-tempered race; but it was soon over, and by the time Moonstone's hoofs rang out a challenge in the courtyard, the general had himself made Frank's excuses. It was the lad's first day in a strange country. He might have got a bad start after all, and some officious beast might have led him wrong with shouts of bogs, or bosh of some sort. The lad *must* ride. There had never been a Douglas yet who couldn't lick the field, no matter where.

So day after day the old general sent Frank out, and day after day Frank showed himself more and more deft at opening gates for ladies, squiring them through gaps, and generally "philandering," as his uncle testily put it. The general had in his day been quite "the flower of maidenly pets," but he had never been so far gone as to put any woman, however beautiful, before a fox!

"No girl worth her salt would wish it," he used to say. "A woman who knows anything knows that if a man's not a sportsman, he's not much of a man, anyway."

Another grievance was that Frank didn't know when a woman *was* worth her salt, and when she wasn't, at least, to his uncle's thinking. There was a certain doctor's daughter, to whose bridle rein he stuck with a persistence which, otherwise applied, would have placed him well up with hounds. Katie White was pretty enough of her kind, but the general only went in for thoroughbreds. It would have been sufficiently bad to see a Douglas road-riding with any one, but with Katie White! Bah! it was

intolerable; and at the hunt ball the general's determined patience utterly collapsed: Frank danced with her, sat out with her, "spent the whole evening with her," he grunted, with many an angry adjective smothered in his moustache.

The general did not enjoy that ball, first-rate though it was, but Frank seemed to do so despite the grimness of his uncle's countenance, which looked rebuke at him each time he passed with Katie on his arm.

Another nephew of the general's appeared that night, his sister's son, Keith Fane, who had followed his uncle's profession. They knew but little of each other, however, and the meeting was an unexpected one to both. Captain Fane's geographical knowledge had never fixed the locality of Douglas Court, and his uncle had no notion that he even knew the Montgomeries, with whom he had come.

With one of them he was on terms somewhat passing the bounds of mere acquaintanceship, thought the shrewd old soldier, as Keith valed past him, steering sweet stately *Di* Montgomerie through mysterious mazes with consummate skill. That the love of thoroughbreds was not altogether extinct in the Douglas race, the general was forced to admit as he watched Keith's clean-cut lofty head bending to the little shapely one, not so very far below his own. It would certainly be hard for any man honestly to pick a hole in Miss Montgomerie. I say honestly, because there were many who would fain, however falsely, cavil at charms which *Di* too clearly showed were not for them. She never allowed people to be under any illusion on that point, and it was to this she owed her nickname of *Disdainful Di*!

That Keith had little cause to cavil seemed beyond a doubt, yet could the general have heard the curt sentences, almost fierce in their intensity, which dropped from that canary-coloured moustache, he would have found that in the nephew who bore a stranger's name the Douglas temper was as strongly developed as the Douglas taste.

Di was a thoroughbred. Through all the dropping fire of angry accusations she bore herself unmoved, and that she even listened only a keen observer could have told. Yet had Keith been one whit less excited he must have felt the tremour of the slender hand upon his arm, although he could not see an occasional flash, which threatened danger, in those great grey-blue eyes.

"I hope you are satisfied," he is saying wrathfully.

"With what? With you?"

"Hardly," he answers bitterly. "What a flirt you are! What would you like for a present?"

No answer, but the haughty little head rears itself even higher than its wont, and danger signals flash out beneath the long dark lashes. Keith continues, "I should like to give you something nice, you know, when you marry Harborough."

The slender hand drops from his arm, and looking straight into his eyes Di says, "Are you not ashamed of yourself? You have no right to speak to me like this."

"You needn't tell me that, I know it too well. I will apologize if you like."

"I don't think that would do much good," says Di; then her tone softens and she adds, "Don't make me lose my temper, Keith. It's no good quarrelling, we don't see each other so often. Stop talking like a costermonger on Saturday night, and let us go and sit down somewhere."

They go into the corridor, and make for a cushioned window-seat at the far end. "Now," says Di, as she sinks into the corner, "what is the matter? What do you want?"

"What do I want? What I can't get, and what I suppose Harborough will."

"Stop!" says Di peremptorily, "I won't have this. Look at me and tell me if you *really* believe I have even flirted with Lord Harborough."

Keith does look at her. How lovely she is! The stately white throat supporting the shapely head so proudly, the great eyes flashing as they challenge him to prove his charge, and an angry, yet most beautiful flush burning her cheeks. As he looks at her his eyes change and lighten, and the love he shows so strangely takes possession of them. He answers slowly, "No! I don't really believe you ever do flirt. I *know* you don't when I look at you. You haven't got it in your face."

"Then why don't you trust me? You might. I never do anything."

"I can't," he says. "You don't know what it is. I've got a beastly jealous nature. I've always told you that the woman I love will have a miserable time of it; if she loves me, that is. I make you wretched as well as myself."

"But why?"

"Why? Because I simply can't stand your looking at, or speaking to any man."

"It's very stupid of you. I *can't* spend every moment with you. As it is we shall have the whole county discussing our affairs, and what *is* the good of that when it can't come to anything."

"No good," he says drearily. "I'd better go. I was a fool to come. I wish to heaven you were a beggar, child; then I'd exchange into the Indian battalion, and ask you to come with me. I wonder if you would? You couldn't speculate and lose all your money, could you?"

She shook her head. "I'm afraid not. It's too much tied up, and there are too many trustees. I don't get a chance. But, Keith, would you really like it?"

"*Like* it! If you cared for me as I do for you, you wouldn't ask me," he answered passionately.

"But—you hate India. You used to say you would rather die than go back."

"Because it meant leaving you behind. But that's neither here nor there. You're not a beggar, and you can't be one, so there's an end of it. We'd better go back. I dare not stop here; I can't stand it. I know what it comes to."

"Tell me first, do you really mean that you would give up everything and everybody, hunting and all, to take me out to India?"

"Yes," he says. "Child, will you never understand how I love you?"

The interval between the dances is over. Every one has gone back to the ball-room, except two couples at the other end. Di slips her hand into his as she answers, "I think I'm satisfied; but why do you mind about my miserable money? I shouldn't mind, at least not much, if you had heaps and I hadn't a farthing."

"I wish to God I had."

"You would love me all the more if I were poor," she went on, "so why shouldn't you let me——"

"It's utterly different; the man ought to have the money, and the woman needn't have any."

"That's nonsense."

"It's not—it's sober fact. When a man makes love to a woman as I've done to you, and hasn't a penny to keep her, he deserves to be kicked out of the house. I never meant to do it. You would never have known if Clonmel hadn't put you down that day with the A——. I thought it was all up," he ends with a shudder.

"Poor old Keith," says Di consolingly. "I'm not so *very* sorry we got into that ditch."

Keith stoops his head suddenly, and kisses the hand resting on the back of the sofa. "Will you follow me to-morrow?" he says. "I'm going to ride Kildare, and I'll give you a good lead."

"I don't know," she answers doubtfully. "There are a lot of us going out. The Bristowes and my cousins, and Maud and Bertie."

"A gaudy lot!" Captain Fane impolitely remarks. "You'd better follow me. Let me pilot you. I've led you ill enough other ways, but we'll go straight to-morrow. You *will* follow me?"

She is silent for a minute, then she looks up and says, "I'm afraid I should follow you to the devil, if you asked me."

Keith laughs more than content, then says, "No danger of that now. I've changed my track. I was making pretty fast in his direction two years ago, but angels without wings stop one sometimes. You know, child," he adds very tenderly, "I want to make sure of seeing you again somewhere, however we may be separated here, so I have made up my mind to get to Heaven if I can."

CHAPTER II.

"Ten acres of copse on a gentle slope,
By a belt of gorse surrounded,
All grass, as far as the eye could reach
By the line of blue hills bounded."

A PROMISING description, and one that fitted Bentley thicket well. It was a very favourite meet, and there was a tremendous field the day after the hunt ball; men who rode, men who tried to, men who didn't. Sportswomen, frivolous women, flirting women, weight carriers, thoroughbreds, screws, cobs, ponies, while landaus, dog-carts, gigs and other abominations abounded.

Never mind. Once get away from Belton with a straight goer, and the crowd won't trouble you. The general is there of course; also Frank, on Moonstone again. He has been riding his own horses lately, as his uncle's interest in his mounts had flagged considerably, but this morning he had asked him to ride the grey, adding, "And if you *can* go, Frank, for heaven's sake go to-day." But "go" Frank can't and won't, according to his uncle's meaning that is, although, as regards Katie White, he seems already gone. He is talking earnestly to her now, pleasantly too, to judge by her face. She looks very pretty this morning, although her figure does not fit her habit as does Miss Montgomerie's. I put it this way advisedly. There are figures which seem moulded expressly for a habit, while to others no habit can be moulded. Many hunting women are as fain to cavil at "Disdainful Di," as are those men of whose very existence she seems almost ignorant. Once your friend, she will cleave to you through thick and thin, but few are the favoured ones who pass the bounds of mere acquaintance, and of the many who talk so glibly of "Disdainful Di," few dare to drop the Miss Montgomerie before her. This being so, her beauty is a challenge, and one which in the hunting field it were sheer madness to take up. However pleased a woman may be with herself and her turn-out, put her by Di, and in ten minutes the smartest of them all will feel herself a sweep. Some declare it's her long waist, others say it's her seat, she sits so square, sure to give her horse a sore back, &c.; but whatever it is, she is a true Diana, and rules right royally in the hunting field. The bay thoroughbred which carries her to-day is worthy of her. Despite the steeplechases he has scored, he goes kind and gentle as possible with Di, and has never yet been known to "falter or to fail."

Keith Fane had kept away from her until hounds were thrown into covert. He knew the curiosity of crowds well enough, and had, moreover, shrewd suspicions that Di had been told by more than one member of her family that she had made a frightful fool of herself last night. He was well up in the signs of bad weather, and although she would own to nothing in the few minutes' talk

they had had that morning, he noted that she was more determinately "Disdainful Di" than he had ever seen her, and no whit disposed to cancel his appointment as her pilot. Perhaps he felt a little compunction for the pressure he had brought to bear last night, but "Anyhow, no one can accuse you of running after me," he had said with a sad sort of smile.

Once mounted, however, Kildare gave him no time for reflection or remorse, for up to now he had rarely been on all four legs at once. He was a grand horse, standing sixteen one, deep in the girth, well ribbed up, with good square hocks and a clear sparkling eye, one who would face anything.

Directly hounds were thrown in, Captain Fane ranged up to Miss Montgomerie, and stationing themselves at a likely corner from which they could see well into covert, they looked business-like enough to satisfy even General Douglas. He noted approvingly that Keith knew better than to talk, even with such temptation beside him as "Disdainful Di." Hark! they are away, their fox making straight for Black Banks, about as stiff a line of country as you'll find in —shire. Even Keith's skill and science cannot baffle Kildare's rush as he tears down the hill, bounded by a stiffish fence. Powerless to check him, Keith sets his teeth, and sits tight. Well it is that he does so, for barely rising, the horse crashes right through briar and bramble, which do their best to leave him riderless; but Keith remains, and turns his head to say, "Made a hole for you, Di." It is not wanted though, for as he speaks she lands safely at his side. On they go at racing speed, Kildare steadying field by field and jumping grandly. By the time their fifth fence is negotiated most of the field are choked off. The pace is tremendous, and the fences big enough to make most men think twice about them with a horse a trifle blown.

The master and his sister, a noted steeplechase rider, who is stopping with them, a young cotton manufacturer to whom money means the best hunters to be bought, and one of the whips, are all that remain of the mighty muster at the thicket. The huntsman came to grief a field or two back, and his is not the only empty saddle. "But no time to pause, for over the meads they sweep, with a scent breast high." Tally ho! there he goes, gliding along the hedge-row up the hill in front of them.

"By Jove!" Keith mutters, and takes a look at Di.

"All right," she says quietly, and on they go; the only two who do, for at the top of the hill runs a post and rails, which might well cause "the firmest cheek to blanch, the sternest courage fail," about five feet four, and as stiff as they make them.

Keith didn't half like it. It's well enough to risk your own and your hunter's necks, but when it comes to chancing the one you hold dear above all else on earth, with the possibility that *you* may get over safe, and she mayn't, it isn't pleasant. Still,

to avoid it they must lose at least a field, and that Di will not do that, Keith knows full well. With the most earnest prayer he ever breathed that Kildare may smash the top rail, he puts him at it, and the horse answers to his touch, though not to his prayer. He jumps it clear, and Keith turns with his heart in his mouth. Di knows her horse, and does not slacken speed too much. She has absolute faith in her bay, and it is not misplaced. Gathering himself together, with a mighty leap he clears the rail as though it were a hurdle.

"Thank God," says Keith devoutly. "Well done, my darling."

They are now the only two with hounds, and as they gallop down the long grass field, they break from scent to view, and in another moment the brave old fox is pulled down, and Keith's cheer reached the ears of the master hard behind. He and the whip are soon up, and as the former offers Di the brush, he says, "Of all you have won, Miss Montgomerie, this is the most gloriously gained."

"Well! it isn't often one gets the chance of jumping five feet odd of timber at the end of a run like this," responds Di laughing.

"Thank Heaven! No," says the M. F. H. Five minutes ago Keith would have said "Amen!" but all his fear for Di is forgotten in the delicious pride a man feels in the woman he loves. She is now praising and petting Bay Beauty in ruinous fashion, Keith declares, to which she retorts that Kildare would go far kinder if he were praised a bit.

"Well, he does deserve it," Captain Fane admits. "I could have kissed him for the way he took that rail if you hadn't been behind me."

"Did you think I should be jealous?" Di queried mischievously.

"No, I never thought of that, but I wanted the brute to make a hole for you."

"Thank you!" said Di, turning up her chin disdainfully. Just then the old general rode up, and making straight for Captain Fane, said: "How long do you stop down here, Keith?"

"Only till Saturday."

"Well, then, come on to me and stop as long as you like, the longer the better. I can mount you five days a week, pretty well, too, though I've nothing to beat that horse of yours. He's a grand goer."

"That he is," said Keith; "I never wish for a better."

"Bring him with you, of course," said his uncle, "and anything else you like. I've two spare stalls and a loose box."

"Thanks; but Kildare and my charger represent my stud."

"All the better, then you'll be able to exercise mine; shall expect you to dinner on Saturday."

Could any man refuse such an offer as this? Keith could not anyhow. That he were wiser not to stay near Di he knew, but when the tempter baits the hook you long for with unlimited hunters, can any true sportsman look the other way? Our friend scarcely struggled, but swallowed the bait with such avidity that Saturday saw him landed at the Court. To his surprise he found his uncle alone there. The night of the Belton meet Frank had informed the general that he had proposed to Miss White at the ball and that she had accepted him. "Naturally," said his uncle. Then Frank flared up, so did the general, and finally Frank left the house with the declared intention of marrying Katie forthwith, which he accordingly did: he had enough of his own to live on, and chose to take his own way, caring little that his name was struck out of his uncle's will, and that Douglas Court would know him no more. It is probably quite as bad to be forced to hunt and badgered to go when you don't want to as it is to be unable to do either when you do.

In Keith the general found a nephew after his own heart, and very loth was he to part with him when the end of his leave drew near. Casting about for some means of keeping him he bethought himself of Di Montgomerie, and one night in the smoking-room, when Keith was deep in dreary calculations of the many months that must elapse before he saw Di again, wondering vaguely whether his uncle had any influence, whether if he had he would use it to get him an appointment, and whether if he got it he could ask her to marry him upon it, the general electrified him by saying suddenly:

"Do you ever think of marrying, Keith?"

Captain Fane started, "Marrying? I?"

"Yes, you; why not?"

"Can't on my pay."

"No! but you will have more than your pay." His nephew stared, and the general continued, "You see, Keith, Douglas Court wants a mistress; I shall never marry, and I'd sooner see Di Montgomerie at the head of my table than any woman in the length and breadth of Europe."

Keith's pipe fell with a crash, but his hopes rose proportionately, and so it came about that the next hunting season Douglas Court no longer lacked a mistress. Luckily Keith's jealousy did not embrace his uncle, for the general vied with him in bending to the châtelaine's commands; but happiness agreed with Keith, and when once Di got the bridle fairly on, her delicate hands seemed in a fair way to rout the demon utterly.

As uncle and nephew agreed, "For curing a restless, fidgetty brute, whether biped or quadruped, there's no one like

"Our dear, disdainful Di."

“ERE THE LILACS FADE.”

OH ! sad, cold face that once was my delight,
Alone you stand among gay Fashion's throng ;
And my heart waxeth warm at the mere sight,
And sings once more love's old forgotten song.
Your favourite lilacs bloom upon your breast,
Their subtle perfume steals across my brow,
Recalls that night when we said " Love is best."
Alas ! Beloved, do you say so now ?
A look, dear, in your wistful eyes to-night,
Reveals to me that you too know regret.
Were we so wise to struggle 'gainst love's might ?
Do both our hearts not ache with passion's fret ?
Say, ere the lilacs fade and swiftly die,
Shall love's sweet kiss stifle sad Memory's sigh ?

NELLIE FORTESCUE-HARRISON.

A FALSE START.

By HAWLEY SMART.

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "BAD TO BEAT," "THE OUTSIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EDITH MOLECOMBE.

"WHAT did you mean by saying you didn't know whether to be glad or sorry?" asked Maurice, as soon as he had recovered from his first surprise.

"It looks rather as if the charge brought against you by these two terrible women was true, doesn't it?"

"It does rather," replied Maurice, smiling, as he dropped the cheque into his waistcoat-pocket, "but we know that it is not so. I have a perfectly clear conscience on that score, and just think, Bessie, what we can do with the money. It will put us perfectly straight with the Tunnleton tradespeople—no bother about writing to your trustees now, my dear—enable me to stop Badger's mouth with a handsome cheque on account, and leave us a comfortable balance besides in the local bank.

"But what will Mr. Chylton think when you cash the cheque, Maurice? You know you have never told him anything about Uncle John's wedding present. He believes thoroughly in you, but the presenting such a big cheque as this on the top of this charge will look so dreadfully as if you had won the money by betting."

"What a clever little woman it is!" rejoined Maurice, admiringly. "You are right; it would. I will take it up and get it cashed at my banker's in town."

This Maurice accordingly did, but he then committed the strange oversight of paying two hundred pounds into his account at the Tunnleton Bank. This was even more likely to induce the people at the bank to put a false construction on his sudden acquirement of money than if he had put in John Madingley's cheque. The story of the sporting parson who had won such a good stake over the Chesterfields was by this well known to the inferior strata of Tunnleton; the bank clerks looked upon Maurice, not with the horror of Generals Maddox and Praun, but with no little admiration. The ostlers and the fly-drivers had by this time heard of Mr.

Enderby as a rare judge of racing, and accorded him no little veneration in consequence. He had mounted a far higher pinnacle in the eyes of these godless understrappers of the stable than any eloquence in the pulpit could ever have placed him on. Sad to say, they took more interest in the ways of this world than in the preparing of themselves for another.

Mr. Rumford, the butcher, and his brethren, when they found all their arrears promptly discharged, were similarly convinced that the report of Mr. Enderby's racing proclivities was true, and these good people received it and looked upon it in very different lights; some of them laughed, and thought a sporting curate rather a joke than otherwise; but there were others more straightlaced who shook their heads at the idea of a clergyman dabbling in such a pursuit, the opinion of these latter somewhat mollified by the comforting fact that they had at all events got their money. In short, at the end of a fortnight from that Newmarket week Maurice Enderby might as well have endeavoured to convert the betting-ring as to induce the bulk of Tunnleton to believe that he did not bet upon races. Even his stanch friend Frank Chylton was staggered; he naturally knew that Maurice had paid in two hundred pounds to his account, and in face of the charge brought against him there could be no doubt that this was a most suspicious circumstance; he was loyal to his friend as ever, but did think that out of consideration for those who were standing by him Maurice should be more prudent. Frank saw at once that the payment of this two hundred would be known to all the clerks in the bank, and, though his subordinates knew very well that keeping their mouths closed was rigorously exacted by their position, he had no doubt that with such a titillating piece of scandal flying about the town they would never be able to refrain from contributing their quota to it.

Maurice, in the meantime, pursued the even tenour of his way. He had laid out his windfall exactly as he had contemplated. Mr. Badger was profuse in his acknowledgments, and his tradesmen were all *chapeau bas*, and that balance at the bank was a comforting thing to think upon; but for all that he could not disguise from himself that a considerable portion of Tunnleton society gave him the cold shoulder. Their greetings were chilly, and he was apt to find himself left out of the delirious gaieties of that centre of the universe. One of his enemies there was who certainly retired from the fray sore discomfited. In an ill-advised moment General Maddox took upon himself to read this contumacious young man a lesson on manners.

I don't think the general ever forgot that fall, and, were he alive, I think, would even still give a slight shudder at hearing Maurice Enderby's name mentioned. It took place in the club, though not before witnesses. General Maddox was far too gentlemanly a man to have spoken as he did except in private.

"Mr. Enderby! er, er! you'll excuse my mentioning it, but when a lady of Mrs. Maddox's position takes the trouble to call upon Mrs. Enderby, with the kind view of tendering her some good advice, I really think she is entitled to be treated with civility and consideration."

Maurice's face hardened, and there was a dangerous glitter in his eye as he replied,

"Mrs. Maddox, sir, entered Mrs. Enderby's drawing-room apparently to malign her husband; she was ruder, as was also Mrs. Praun, than I had believed it possible that any lady could be. I have further to point out that my private affairs are no business of yours, and I will trouble you not to meddle with them for the future."

"Sir!" exclaimed General Maddox, "do you mean to insinuate——"

"I insinuate nothing," interposed Maurice quickly. "I have said what I meant to say, and am now going to lunch, and have the honour to wish you good morning."

As for General Maddox, he sank back in an arm-chair, gasping with indignation. His usual portly presence was in a state of collapse pitiable to witness; it was probably a quarter of a century since any one had presumed to tackle the pompous old general in this fashion.

"By Jupiter! I'll have him out," he muttered at last, ignoring for the moment that the duel was as obsolete in England as the tilt-yard, and that even in its most flourishing days the priest's cassock carried exemption. After a little he got up, and as he walked home said, "No! there is only one thing to do, hunt the fellow out of Tunnleton; and, by Jupiter! I'll do it."

The glorious July days rolled sunnily by, and the country around Tunnleton is in all its glory. The woods and fields are full of wild flowers, and the hedges thick with dog-roses and wild honeysuckle, the meadows alive with sturdy lambs, and the corn, though standing strong and green upon the ground, yet here and there begins to show slight indications of changing to a golden hue.

The parade is deserted, and nothing but the severe exigencies of shopping bring the fair ladies of Tunnleton to the High Street. The hum of insects is in the air, the very birds give vent to low querulous twitterings as if entering their protest about the state of the thermometer. The cattle stand languidly switching their tails till the aggressive army of flies proves too much for their patience, when they stampede in wild ungainly gallops round their pastures. Tunnleton lies at the bottom of a basin, and consequently the little air there is barely reaches it. The shopkeepers stand sweltering in their shirt-sleeves at their doors; no one would think of buying and selling, save from dire necessity, in such weather. The dogs lie upon the door-steps with their lolling tongues and panting sides, mutely appealing in their canine breasts

against the irony of dedicating such days peculiarly to them. It is one of those glorious old English summers such as are all but dim memories.

Tunnleton society has betaken itself to the open air. It is cricketing, lawn-tennis, picnicking, munching fruit and consuming claret-cup. There were perpetual open-air gatherings of one sort or another, and Maurice Enderby could not but see that from a great many of these his wife and himself were excluded; there could be no doubt of it; people who had called upon them in the first instance, and who had appeared anxious to make their acquaintance, now neglected to ask them to such entertainments as they might be giving. It did not require much penetration to see that there was a hostile influence at work, and that he had made implacable enemies of the two generals he felt no doubt. Of course, the rector, his friends the Chyltons, and some others welcomed him as cordially as of yore; but amongst the people who had not exactly dropped his acquaintance, but had apparently struck him off their invitation list, Maurice was a little surprised to find the Molecombes. Mr. Molecombe was the senior partner in Molecombe and Chylton's bank, and had, on Frank Chylton's representation, been one of the first people to call and offer civility to the Enderbys; however, of the cause of their defection he was destined to be speedily enlightened.

He was passing through the deserted High Street on one of those errands that formed part of his daily work, when he encountered one of the Miss Torkeslys; as before said, no one ever went out in Tunnleton without meeting a Torkesly.

"Good morning, Mr. Enderby," she exclaimed, with all the volubility characteristic of her race. "Have you heard the news?"

"No," replied Maurice, as he shook hands; "I was not aware that there was anything stirring—not even a breeze," he added, smiling.

"Oh yes, I assure you, Mr. Enderby, a marriage—a real marriage. And I suppose it will take place in the autumn. She is *such* a nice girl, and I am so fond of her. I am going up now to congratulate her. I am sure they must be pleased! A young good-looking husband with lots of money, what more could any one want? I don't believe she cares much about him, you know. And I should think she is a good deal older than he is, but it will do all very well, no doubt, and I am sure I am delighted. And, you know, it really was getting time dear Edith was settled."

"Excuse me, Miss Torkesly, but I really have no idea of whom you are speaking."

"No, I forgot you don't go about quite so much as you—I mean—that is, you gentlemen don't interest yourselves so much in marriages and engagements as we do."

"But won't you enlighten my ignorance?" replied Maurice.

"Of course, of course—you will be delighted to hear it, such

friends as they are of yours, and you so intimate with the Chyltons, and all!"

Maurice said nothing. He felt that this feminine windbag must have its way.

"Yes," continued the young lady, complacently; "Edith Molecombe has accepted Mr. Madingley, and, of course, the wedding will be a very grand affair when it does come off; and I do hope they will ask us to the breakfast. Good morning. I really have no time to stand gossiping," and with a gracious smile and bend of her head Miss Torkesly resumed her weary pilgrimage; for the Molecombes lived about a mile outside the town, and under that fierce midday sun the walk thither was really no small sacrifice at the altar of friendship.

"Yes," muttered Maurice, as he strolled on, "that would easily account for the Molecombes dropping me. I know Mr. Madingley has never forgiven me for putting him down, and, without knowing anything positive about it, I should guess he had the capacity of being what Dr. Johnson admired, '*a good hater*,'" and then Maurice thought later in the afternoon he would stroll up to the Chyltons and have a talk with them. So when the sun waxed low in the heavens, dropping like a ball of fire into his bed in the west, Maurice and his wife started for the Chyltons. They lived in a pretty villa standing in the middle of a large garden. To say grounds would be a misnomer, it was really nothing more than an extensive garden—well shrubbed, well treed, and tastefully laid out. Sitting under a horse-chestnut on the verge of the flower-gemmed lawn was Mrs. Chylton, a tea-equipage at her side, and her two children playing at her feet.

"I am so glad to see you, Bessie," she cried, as she rose to welcome the new-comer, "and you too, Mr. Enderby. How good of you to come up and lighten my solitude! I was suffering from a bad headache in the early part of the afternoon, and so gave up all thoughts of the Molecombes' garden-party. By the way, how is it that you are not there?"

"For the best of all possible reasons—we were not asked," rejoined Bessie.

Mrs. Chylton said nothing more, but she was a firm friend of the Enderbys, and resolved to take the earliest opportunity of favouring the Molecombe family with her opinion on the subject.

"I suppose you were very much astonished at the announcement of Edith's engagement?" said she.

"Well, yes; but, as I only know Mr. Madingley by sight, I was not likely to have any suspicion of what was coming."

"No," interposed Maurice, "and then, as you know, Mrs. Chylton, in consequence of my quarrel with Generals Maddox and Praun, a good many houses in the place are now closed to me."

"Yes, they no doubt have considerable influence in Tunnleton, and a certain number of people would be sure to take their side,

but after the shameful conduct of their wives I don't see, Mr. Enderby, that you could have done anything else."

"No, a man cannot allow his wife to be insulted. General Maddox further had the presumption to attempt to lecture me upon keeping my wife in order."

"What!" cried Laura Chylton.

"He had. That really was the gist of a conversation he thought proper to commence with me when we found ourselves left together the next day in the morning-room of the club, but I don't think he is likely to try his hand at that again," and then Maurice gave Mrs. Chylton an account of that interview.

Mrs. Chylton burst out laughing when Maurice described with a good deal of humour the conclusion of his passage of arms with the general.

"Oh, Mr. Enderby!" she cried; "did you really say that to him? He will never forgive you. I don't suppose his dignity has received such a shock for years; and General Maddox without his dignity is nothing. Frank must hear this—it will be nearly the death of him; he'll be home from the Molecombes about seven. If you can put up with cold lamb and salad for dinner, be good people and stop. It's not sermon night, Mr. Enderby, so you have no excuse."

"I shall be very glad indeed," said Maurice.

"Now that's neighbourly," replied Laura. "Smoke if you want to; you'll find the papers and magazines in Frank's room. Bessie and I are going to have a good long lazy gossip."

CHAPTER XIX.

"WHAT A BORE I'VE BEEN."

FRANK CHYLTON came home to dinner, and, as his wife prophesied, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks at Maurice's account of his skirmish with General Maddox.

"I don't blame you," he said; "old Maddox richly deserved it, but it isn't calculated to quench the ill-will with which he regards you. No, depend upon it, he and his immediate friends will make the very most of this trumped-up story, and they can, to some extent, make the place unpleasant to you, no doubt."

"We must endeavour to bear his enmity with what resignation we can. If his friendship is to be burdened with a right to administer advice on the part of Mrs. Maddox, I infinitely prefer to be without it—eh, Bessie?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Enderby, laughing merrily. "I am quite content to figure as the bad child who wouldn't take its powder in spite of all assurances that it was for its good. I suppose they were very full of Edith's engagement this afternoon?"

"Yes, it was a perfect *feu de joie* of congratulations. She looked happy and conscious, and Madingley more at his ease and less of a fool than a man usually does under the circumstances."

"Is Mr. Molecombe very pleased, Frank?" inquired his wife.

"Very, I should say—'Very satisfactory, good county family, heir to a nice property—yes, thank you, it will do, Chylton,' he replied, when I congratulated him. You know his short jerky manner of talking."

"Well, I suppose it is a good thing for her," rejoined Laura, "though personally I can't say I ever quite fancied Mr. Madingley—I can't tell you why, but it is so."

"I think I can, Mrs. Chylton, but pray put no particular stress upon my opinion, as I'll admit to being somewhat prejudiced against him. What you are conscious of is this—that Mr. Madingley is not quite a gentleman."

"You are right, Maurice," replied her husband. "He opened a very liberal account with us when he first came, and, as far as money is concerned, there is no reason to suppose but what he has plenty; but you're right, it crops out whenever you have much to do with him. Once get through the French polish, and you'll find an arrogant cad at the bottom of it."

"Come, Bessie," cried Laura Chylton, laughing; "when the gentlemen get so very pronounced in their opinions, it is best to leave them to themselves ere worse comes of it."

"Now, Maurice," said Frank, as soon as the ladies had left the room, "I've something on my mind concerning you. I hate mysteries and therefore I'm going to out with it at once. I don't want in the least to pry into your private affairs, but what induced you in the face of this scandal to pay £200 into our bank last week? Of course, Molecombe knows it, and forgive me if it sounds like an impertinence, it is a big sum for a man in your position to lodge to his account, and I need hardly say gives additional handle to the story of your having won money by horse-racing."

"Stupid of me!" exclaimed Maurice. "I wanted cash to draw against, to satisfy my tradespeople; I came unexpectedly into some money, and, never thinking of the construction you have put upon it, paid it into your bank."

Frank Chylton said nothing, but he looked uneasily at his companion. Maurice caught the glance, hesitated for a minute or two, and then said:

"You've been a staunch friend, Frank, and are entitled to know the whole story, and, providing you will give me your promise not to open your lips without my permission, I will tell it you."

Chylton readily gave the required promise, and then, without further preamble, Maurice related the story of Uncle John's eccentric wedding present, and what had come of it so far.

Frank listened attentively.

"I don't know anything about such things," he said, when

Maurice had finished, "but how it led you to take an interest in racing matters is very easy of comprehension. In that respect it has been perhaps an unfortunate gift, but, so far as I do understand things, from a money point of view, it is likely to be very profitable. This successful filly has only just started on her career, and will probably win several more valuable races before she has done. I have only one thing to say, don't think that I'm preaching, but for heaven's sake don't place reliance on big cheques like this tumbling in. That would sap the marrow of any man's character, and it is after all the hazard of two or three years. It's moral gambling, Maurice, and your uncle had better have written you a cheque for five hundred right off than made Mrs. Enderby such an ill-omened present. Forgive me, old man. What a bore I have been! Come and have a cigar on the lawn before you trot home."

It was a very pleasant hour that, in the garden, in the bright light of the full moon. Frank and Maurice strolled up and down enjoying their tobacco, and talking over their old boyish days, when Maurice used to come down to spend his Easter holidays at Tunnleton; while the ladies interchanged those confidences which it is seldom the sex has not at command. Ah, those boyish days! I am not quite sure whether we ever experience the same pure, unadulterated enjoyment afterwards. I am not talking of school-days, in which there was more to loathe than to like, but of those holiday times when we were permitted our own sweet will, and were up at daybreak to take up the night-lines. Then there were birds' nests and wasps' nests to be taken in the morning, countless occupations for the afternoon if our restless energies were not expended, and rabbits to be potted with the old single barrel we were allowed in the gloaming. That grim piece of irony, the holiday-task, did not exist in those days, or if it did was a little joke between master and boy, supposed to pacify parents in wet weather, when their progeny made themselves more objectionable than usual in consequence of enforced confinement, but never to be seriously alluded to on returning to school.

As they walked home Maurice said to his wife:

"I have had it clean out with Frank Chylton, Bessie, and told him the whole story. He a little staggered me; he seems to regard your uncle's as the gift of the wicked fairy, and is a little disposed to take your view of it."

"Oh, I hope not, Maurice. I own I was afraid at first it was leading you to take an interest in matters that would be destructive, to say nothing of disgraceful, to your professional career. But you have given that up, have you not?"

"Yes; but I'll admit the poison is hardly out of my blood. It is with great difficulty I abstain from the sporting papers, and in our own daily I never can resist the sporting intelligence. Is there inflammatory action in money that comes to one in this wise?"

On my word, I am half tempted to believe it. Bessie, Bessie, I am afraid this fatal present of Uncle John's will be the ruin of me!"

"Nonsense, Maurice dear, you're excited to-night, and taking too strained a view of things. I know I took the theoretical and high-toned view at first; but, oh, Maurice, when it comes to the practice, there is no denying there's a comfort in money that's not dishonestly come by. To walk into Rumford's shop now is so different to what it was a fortnight ago. Take Uncle John's present, as we should take it, as windfalls by no manner of means to be reckoned on. Don't trouble your head about the 'Wandering Nun,' and then, dear Maurice, no harm can come to you."

Poor Bessie! She spoke as a woman will speak, or, for the matter of that, men too, about a thing outside her experience; as if nine men out of ten, who have made a tolerable bet on the Derby or drawn a prominent favourite in a Derby sweep, do not, more or less, speculate upon what they will do with those imaginary winnings. They may deny it, but I know better, and have even had many invitations to dinners from sanguine backers, dinners which, sad to say for their sakes, were never celebrated.

When the Enderbys reached home they found a heap of letters on their table: of these, three only have anything to do with this story, but with these three it is necessary the reader should be acquainted; one was to Maurice, the others to his wife: we will take Mrs. Enderby's first.

"MY DEAR BESSIE,

"You and I are halves in the greatest flyer of the year. There will be another sugar-plum fall into our mouths, I think, at Goodwood, and perhaps something more later on, though you know racing is both, like life, uncertain and desperately wicked. You must forgive an old man, my dear; people were laxer in their ideas when I was young, and I am too old to change; I've done and do my duty conscientiously in my own way, but my ways, I know, are not in accordance with the times.

"What I am writing to you chiefly about is this. Can you put up with an old, somewhat irritable old man after Goodwood? I am ordered change and quiet, and though I have no business to be seen on a race-course, must go there to see my favourite run. Tunnleton suited me years ago, and the doctors tell me will now, and that the iron-water is just the tonic I require. They must say something, but of course what I do require is the hands of the clock put back a quarter of a century.

"Drop me a line to the Bedford, Covent Garden, and tell your husband he's not to fidget about wine; I am peculiar in that respect, and my own wine-merchant will send down what is good for me, or at all events what I take. If you can't take me in, get me comfortable lodgings near, and, upon second thoughts, perhaps

that would be best, though I should like to dine, &c., with you for the sake of your society. You have a baby, you know, and the most estimable babies will give vent to screams and wailings, which no bachelor, much less an old one, appreciates.

“Kind regards to your husband,

“Ever, dear Bessie,

“Your affectionate Uncle,

“JOHN MADINGLEY.”

“We can’t well take him in, Maurice. He will require a couple of rooms to make him thoroughly comfortable; besides, I should be on tenterhooks every time——”

“Baby lifted up his voice and wept,” interposed Maurice, laughing, “and it is not to be supposed that young autocrat is going to change his habits to accommodate a great-uncle. No, no, Bessie, I’ll get a comfortable bedroom and sitting-room at Bevan’s close by. He can lunch, dine, and spend as much of the evening as he chooses with us, and will have his own rooms to retreat to whenever he wants to be quiet. It will all work very well, only, little woman, don’t spare the table money while Uncle John’s with us.”

“Never fear,” replied Bessie, merrily, “we will go in for riotous living, which will probably throw out his gout, and bring down a solemn anathema on your devoted head. Who is your other letter from?”

“This,” said Bessie, as she tore it open, “is from the Bridge Court people. They really are very kind—read it——”

“DEAR MRS. ENDERBY,

“Will you both come and spend next week with us? Your husband’s old friend Mr. Grafton has promised to pay us a visit, and I am sure will enjoy a talk over old days with him. Pray tell Mr. Enderby I can take no refusal. If his duties require his presence in Tunnleton, he can walk over after breakfast, and be out again easily in time for dinner. I guarantee that his days shall be at his own disposal if necessary.

“With kindest regards from both myself and the girls, believe me,

“Sincerely yours,

“LOUISA BALDERS.”

“Bridge Court, Tuesday.

“P.S. Let us know when I am to send the carriage for you on Monday.”

“It is very kind of them, and would be a very pleasant change, I should like it immensely, but I suppose it cannot be managed,” said Bessie.

“Why not?” rejoined her husband.

"Well, you see, Uncle John is coming; it is impossible we can go away for a week under those circumstances."

"Nonsense! this is for next week; Uncle John is not coming until the week after Goodwood—three weeks hence. No, it will all fit in very well: write and say we shall be delighted to come; as Mrs. Balders said, I can easily walk over and do my work."

"But who is your letter from, Maurice?" replied Bessie.

"Oh, I had quite forgotten all about that. In the excitement produced by Uncle John's determination to visit Tunnleton, I might well forget everything else; you seem to forget that I have never seen this mysterious uncle, who, like the uncle of the old comedies or the beneficent genii of fairy tales, showers his gold upon us. My letter? why, it's from Bob Grafton; let's see what he has got to say."

"46, Half-Moon Street.

"DEAR MAURICE,

"No end of congratulations on the result of the Chesterfields. Mr. Brook, there is no doubt, possesses a real clinker in the 'Wandering Nun.' I remember a wily old racing man once said to me, 'There is no much better chance for a backer of horses than the getting knowledge of a good two-year-old and following it steadily all through the season.' Now that is exactly your position. You are following what I firmly believe to be the best two-year-old we have seen, with the additional advantage of not risking a shilling."

["I wish Mr. Grafton wouldn't write in that manner," interposed Bessie.

"Don't interrupt," rejoined her husband.]

"John Madingley's was an eccentric wedding present, but on my word it promises to turn out a very profitable one, and a very useful one, no doubt, in these early days of your career, when a few extra hundreds naturally come in handy. The Ham Stakes at Goodwood lie at her mercy, and I can't see what is to beat her in 'the Champagnes' at Doncaster, and to wind up with she has several engagements in the October meetings at Newmarket, though what she will be slipped for one can't tell at present. She is likely anyway to prove a veritable gold-mine to Messrs. Enderby and Brook. I was going to volunteer myself as a visitor for a night or two next week, but I have had a letter from Mrs. Balders asking me to Bridge Court, and assuring me that I should meet you both; so we will have our gossip there, and I will describe the 'Nun' to you. She takes after her sire, and gallops like a piece of machinery.

"Good-bye for the present. Trusting to see you next week, and with kind regards to Mrs. Enderby, believe me ever yours,

"ROBERT GRAFTON."

"I shall be very pleased to meet Mr. Grafton again," said

Bessie, "but Maurice, dear, don't be angry if I give one word of caution. I know you will have some racing talk with Mr. Grafton; but please don't talk about it in public. You know what a scandal is already raised here, and, though the Bridge Court people are not so particular, yet it is wonderful how things get round, and it really is calculated to do you harm in your profession."

Maurice made no reply. "Do him harm in his profession!" suddenly it flashed across him whether he had not made a mistake; whether he could ever be fitted for the high office he had taken on himself; or whether it would not be better to pause before seeking to be ordained priest.

CHAPTER XX.

BITTEN OF THE TARANTULA.

HAVING read the papers and pronounced his views on the political situation in those grave sonorous tones to which the club morning-room was so well accustomed, General Maddox shouldered his white umbrella and made his way home to luncheon. He saw as he entered his dining-room that Mrs. Maddox was evidently in what he termed a state of fuss.

"General," she exclaimed, "I have had one of the Torkesly girls here this morning, and you will hardly believe it when I tell you that, in spite of all that has passed, the Enderbys have actually gone to stay at Bridge Court."

"No, you don't mean it!" ejaculated the general, for once surprised out of his customary phlegmatic manner.

"Indeed, I do; Clara Torkesly saw it with her own eyes—saw them get into a Bridge Court carriage at their own door, and drive off with the boxes and portmanteaus outside."

"It is very odd what made the Balders take them up," said the general, meditatively.

"I presume you will think it your duty to interfere?" remarked the lady sharply.

"Me! interfere?" said the general; "why how can I interfere?"

"I presume you will write to Mr. Balders and explain to him that he is entertaining a gambling clergyman who ought to be unfrocked——"

"Nonsense! I haven't met Mr. Balders half-a-dozen times altogether, and our acquaintance is of the very slightest. I can't interfere about whom he may think proper to entertain at Bridge Court; but my opinion is unchanged about Mr. Enderby, and I shall certainly recommend all my friends in Tunnleton to keep clear of him."

"I contend, general, if you did your duty you would write to Mr. Balders at once."

"Then for once, my dear, I shall not do my duty. I am not going to run the risk of being snubbed for such uncalled for interference in an almost stranger's affairs as that would be. When I conceive I am entitled to speak I shall do so."

"And I tell you, general, you're not only entitled to speak now, but you're not doing duty by society if you do not," retorted Mrs. Maddox, with all the obstinacy and steady adherence to her point that a vindictive woman usually displays under such circumstances. Mrs. Maddox was quite conscious that she had had the worst of her skirmish with Mrs. Enderby. It was more bitter than the case of those who, seeking wool, come home shorn. She had gone forth to patronize and came back "snubbed." There was no other word for it; and when that happens to any of us, reprisals, if they cannot be made on the offender, must be made upon somebody else. Do not the veracious legends of the House of Ingoldsby remind us how a great warrior of the Louis Quatorze times

"Had just tickled the tail of Field-Marshal Turenne,
Since which the Field-Marshal's most pressing concern
Was to tickle some other chief's tail in his turn?"

Mrs. Maddox could not retaliate directly upon Bessie, but she could through her husband, and she meant to do so.

Before the general could reply the door opened and the manservant said, "Mr. Jarrow is in the drawing-room, and says he is particularly anxious to see you, sir."

"Say I will be with him immediately, Williams. Now what can Jarrow want? I should think he has come to admit that he can defend Mr. Enderby no longer."

When the general entered his drawing-room, he found Mr. Jarrow distended with importance on the hearth-rug. Now the general was pompous in his manner, but if there was one man who, so to speak, "overflowed and drowned him" in this particular it was the rector of St. Mary's. The Reverend Jacob Jarrow was continually, when upon his travels, mistaken for a high ecclesiastic in consequence of his extremely patronizing, condescending manner, and General Maddox had always an uncomfortable feeling of being defeated at his own game when thrown, as had happened more than once, into collision with the rector. There was nothing much in either man in reality. Both depended upon this imposing grandeur of manner—and that proving ineffective had nothing left but to retire from the fray discomfited. But the credulity of mankind is such that they were wont to be regarded as distinguished members of their respective professions, although their records afforded no grounds for such belief.

"Good morning, Mr. Jarrow," said the general, as he entered the room. "Charmed to see you, as the servant told me you had

something particular to say. I am afraid I owe this visit more to business than sociability."

"Yes, general," returned the rector, "it is my duty as one of her principal sons in Tunnleton to repel all attacks made against the Church. Sir, you ventured to bring a charge against my curate which, had it been true, would have amounted in my eyes to immorality in a minor degree. I have inquired into that charge, and find it to be utterly false. I call upon you now to retract it, and to express regret that you should ever have permitted yourself to have made it.

The general drew himself up to his full height before he replied; then he said slowly, but firmly:

"I regret to say, Mr. Jarrow, that I can do nothing of the kind. What evidence have you of Mr. Enderby's innocence? Nothing, I presume, but his own word. The bare denial of the accused hardly holds good in a court of justice. I have sat upon court-martials in my time."

"The decision of which," interposed Mr. Jarrow, pompously, "I'm given to understand is usually in defiance of all evidence."

"You are speaking, Mr. Jarrow," said the general, flushing slightly, "of a court of which you have no knowledge. The accumulation of evidence against Mr. Enderby is very strong. He has been perpetually discussing racing for some time past. He takes an extraordinary interest in a particular race, shows a feverish interest to know the result of it, and whereas before that race he had been, I am told, in difficulties about money matters, he displays great command of that essential a few days afterwards, and finally lodges a good round sum to his credit at the bank."

"Then, General Maddox, I am to understand that you decline to withdraw the accusation you have made?"

"Certainly I do," replied the general, "until I am convinced it is unfounded."

"And that, sir," said Mr. Jarrow, swelling like an outraged turkey-cock, "you will speedily be convinced of in a court of law, if Enderby follows my advice. How you have picked up all this information about his private affairs I don't pretend to conjecture, but it displays a curiosity about your neighbours' affairs which I should hardly give you credit for taking. If Enderby follows my advice he will bring an action for libel against you. Good morning, General Maddox!" and Mr. Jarrow fumed out of the room.

The general felt not a little discomfited. He felt as unforgiving as ever towards Maurice Enderby, and moreover he still firmly believed that he was guilty of the charge preferred against him, and only aggravated his offence by solemnly denying it; but he was conscious that he had had considerably the worst of the argument with the rector. That taunt about prying into his neighbours' affairs had gone severely home to him. It was not the man's nature to do so, but the idle gossiping life of an inland

watering-place eats into the bones, gets into the blood. Life is so circumscribed that we take an unnatural interest in the doings of those around us. He did not much believe in any action for libel being brought against him, although he was fain to confess it would be "doosid" unpleasant if such a thing did take place. He could see already from the final taunt that Mr. Jarrow had thrown out that a sharp cross-examining barrister could at all events give him a very unpleasant half-hour in the witness-box.

At this juncture he was joined by his wife, and no sooner was that lady made acquainted with the object of Mr. Jarrow's visit than she at once proclaimed no surrender, and expressed her intention of nailing her colours to the mast.

"Mr. Jarrow, indeed! A pompous, meddling priest, who, upon the strength of having written some stupid bombastic letters in the local journals, believed himself a literary man and a great controversialist. Pooh! a fig for the Rev. Jacob Jarrow! He was always fussing about something! Let him fuss about this, and if Mr. Enderby was fool enough to listen to him he would see what good he got out of it. If Mr. Enderby chose to invite the public to inspect the quagmires of his career he could do so; wiser men boarded them over and kept silence about them."

Maurice and his wife, meanwhile, were thoroughly enjoying their stay at Bridge Court. The rector, with all his failings, was a good-natured man, and had conceived a real liking for his new curate, and, hearing where Maurice was going, he at once proposed to take a considerable portion of his, Maurice's, duties off his hands for that week, so that he was left pretty much his own master at Bridge Court.

Bessie thoroughly revelled in the complete freedom from all household affairs, and enjoyed the fruit, the lounging in the grounds, and the lawn-tennis. The Miss Balders, too, thoroughly frank, unaffected English girls, made a great deal of her, and she got on capitally with them, while, to Maurice, chatting over old times or things generally with his friend Bob Grafton was a quiet luxury which he fully appreciated.

"It's a rum start, old John Madingley's coming down to Tunnleton," said Grafton one evening in the smoking-room; "you've never met him, you say; well, it is good you should do so, and whoever recommended him to nurse his gout here did you a good turn."

"Yes; but there is one very singular thing about it. He writes to me to get lodgings for him close to my own house, and proposes to live with us. Now Richard Madingley, his heir, has taken a house in Tunnleton and entertains a good deal. He has a very nice house, and could have put his relation up without any trouble. Curious rather he didn't write to him, isn't it?"

"Yes; I never heard of Richard Madingley, and I never heard where John Madingley's money was likely to go; but though he's

a wonderful hale, hearty man for his seventy years, that last is a question that we shall probably have answered for us before long," said Bob, musingly; "so the fellow gives out that he is heir to Bingwell? He must have done, or the people here could never have arrived at such knowledge."

"Yes, it is owing to his own volunteered information on the subject that Tunnleton is aware of the fact. My wife never heard of him any more than you, but she owns to being very hazy about her cousins generally. She lost her father when she was young, and has never known much about his family, with the exception of Uncle John, the elder of the brothers."

Grafton looked up suddenly and said, although in careless tones:

"Does this new-comer know your wife is a Madingley?"

"I should think not; but, Bob, I want to speak to you about something else. I am afraid I have made a grave mistake in the profession I have selected. I begin to think I am not fitted for clerical life."

"Can't say I ever thought you were," rejoined Grafton sententiously, as he emitted a cloud of tobacco from under his moustache; "you ride too straight and are too fond of sport generally to sober down into a parson of these days. Forty or even thirty years ago you might have done, but you're too late, my boy."

"Why didn't you tell me so before?" said Maurice, somewhat bitterly.

"My dear fellow, what business had I to intrude such advice upon you? It is one of those things a man must think out for himself."

"I don't know what to do, but I think I shall throw it up."

"Well," said Bob, "you're not ordained priest as yet, and therefore you have plenty of time to think the matter over. Now I'm going to volunteer my advice. Your chance has come to you: think it seriously over, and when your mind is clearly made up unbosom yourself to John Madingley. He's in great spirits just now at the running of his pet filly, is evidently very kindly disposed to your wife, and, I should think, would be disposed to assist you in any career you may determine to embark on; only remember, make up your mind and know what you want him to help you in. You can't be such a fool as to think of the turf."

"No," rejoined Maurice; "I'll admit Uncle John's legacy has made me think much more about it than I ever did previously, and I, in my dismay upon finding how absorbed I was getting in its doings, on one occasion actually pictured myself as perpetrating that folly, but I need scarcely say that is by no means my view of 'a career.' I sometimes think Uncle John's wedding present has been a very dubious benefit."

Grafton looked at his friend for a few seconds with no little astonishment, and then, with a shrug of the shoulders, rejoined quietly:

"Well, it's a dubious benefit I only wish some one would confer upon *me*. My dear Maurice, don't build upon it, but without your bothering your head about it, your wife's eccentric present ought, in the course of this year and the next, if you have any luck, to be worth not hundreds, but some few thousands to you, a comfortable send-off in any new line you may strike out."

"You are right, old man," rejoined Maurice; "I shall follow your advice to the letter. I shall think well over what I am going to do, and put racing away from my mind as much as possible. By-the-way, I think you said the Ham Stakes at Goodwood was the next event the 'Wandering Nun' started for?"

A tremendous guffaw from Bob Grafton roused Maurice to a sense of the absurdity of the question on the top of his previous protestation. It was well the pair had the smoking-room to themselves that night, or the room would have rung with laughter.

"Hold me! hold me!" exclaimed Bob, as soon as he could control his merriment; "if ever there was a man badly bitten by the turf-tarantula, you are the party. Bless you, I can understand it, I have dabbled in it all my life; used to bet in saveloys and pounds of raisins when I was a small boy. The complaint's old and chronic with me, but you have got all the early and inflammatory symptoms."

"Nonsense, Bob. I'll admit being bewitched by the 'Nun.' I told you the present was a dubious benefit; but don't think I mean to carry my racing experiences further; however, after such a piece of inconsistency as I have just been guilty of, I don't think I can do better than be off to bed."

"Good night," rejoined Grafton; "if you think a laugh will do Mrs. Enderby good before going to sleep you had better recount that speech to her. I shall just finish my cigar and then follow your example."

"He is right about one thing," mused Grafton, as he smoked on after Maurice had left the room; "he is not fit for a parson, and what the deuce he is to turn his hand to I don't know. I fancy he would have made a good soldier, but I suppose the time has gone by for that; I'm afraid he is too old."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WIRE FROM GOODWOOD.

BUT the stereotyped parson's week came to an end, and the Saturday saw Maurice and his wife back in their little house at Tunnleton. Bob Grafton, in a spirit of sheer good nature, volunteered to telegraph in order to assuage that feverish curiosity which Maurice admitted feeling when he knew that Mr. Madingley's flying filly was to run.

"Now, don't you go fidgeting about; I shall be at Goodwood, and will send you a wire from the course. Don't you go into the club to look at the *tissue*, you shall have the news before they get it there, you bet. Good-bye, Mrs. Enderby, don't let your husband read sporting intelligence, and give him a dose of chloral whenever he manifests a proclivity to talk racing."

Bessie laughed as she stretched out her hand to say good-bye, but it was rather an anxious little laugh all the same, for she was seriously uneasy about this unfortunate interest which her husband took in the affair.

They were destined to have a speedy evidence of what Mr. Jarrow's partizanship brought upon them. General Maddox, rather appalled by the fierce front displayed by the rector of St. Mary's, had strolled disconsolately off to confer with his great friend, General Praun, and that irascible warrior, who was as hot, not as an *Indian*, but as an *English* curry, at once took the fierce and furious view that might have been expected of him.

"Bring an action of libel! He should like to see Jarrow bring one! he should like to see Enderby bring one! upon the whole it would seem that he preferred all Tunnleton should bring actions for libel! He would teach them he was not to be bullied. He had met traders in India under the guise of missionaries, and had never failed to denounce them. He had met a betting man in Tunnleton under the guise of a parson, and he *had* denounced him. He had never been afraid of doing his duty, and wasn't going to flinch from doing it now. Let them bring their actions for libel! let them put him in the box and listen to what he had to tell them; Messrs. Jarrow and Enderby would be very sorry in half an hour that they had invited his revelations!"

A great man Praun no doubt; had gone through life under this delusion, and been accepted as such by numbers of his acquaintance, chiefly on account of an irritable temper and natural combativeness. But he was no judge of what constituted evidence, and what he termed his revelations would have been pronounced mere hearsay and gossip and no evidence at all by a court of law.

Now the next week was Goodwood, and, do what he would, Maurice could not abstain from further glances at the sporting intelligence in his own daily paper. It is useless to rail against the infirmity of human nature, but it is scarce in accordance with our common frailty not to manifest curiosity of what may be the result of a lottery or raffle in which we have taken tickets. Still Maurice manfully refrained from entering the club, or throwing himself in the way of its sporting frequenters. He contented himself with slowly gathering the news of the Goodwood doings in his paper next morning; but on the Wednesday afternoon came an end to this. Between four and five a boy arrived with the yellow tissue, and it need scarcely be said that a Miss Torkesly

happened to be passing and witnessed its delivery. The telegram was of the briefest; it was simply this:

"Congratulations! The 'Wandering Nun' won easily by a length.—R. GRAFTON, Goodwood Racecourse."

A thrill of exultation ran through Maurice's veins. It is no use disputing it! To nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand the acquisition of money *is* inspiring, let their profession be what it may. Maurice did not know exactly what the winning of the Ham Stakes meant, but he had little doubt that it represented two or three hundred to his credit at his banker's.

He sat with the telegram in his hand, musing over several little things in the way of furnishing that Bessie wanted. He thought also of that pony-carriage of which they had indulged in hazy dreams—a pony-carriage with its *et ceteras* that they had pictured as coming within their reach, when editors should at length awaken to a proper sense of the value of his—Maurice's—contributions; and here was this money coming in without his lifting a finger (so he admitted with a half-sense of shame) to earn it. Granting he was a popular contributor, Maurice could not but think how many articles he must need write, how many weary hours he must need pass at his writing-table, before he could hope to make that sum of money! It was demoralizing—he knew it was. He was conscious that, despite all his struggles to the contrary, he was becoming to all intents and purposes a gambler. He did not *actually* play, he did not *actually* bet; but, for all that, he was watching the racing reports as men do the spinning of the ball or the fall of the card at Monte Carlo. However, he soon shook off his reverie; none of us wax solemn for long over the winning of money, more especially won from neither friend nor acquaintance, and it was with quite a gay countenance that he left his study and ascended to his wife's drawing-room.

"Well, Bessie," he exclaimed, "I have just had a telegram from Grafton to say that your uncle's filly is victorious again. I really am glad that he is coming to us next week. He cannot surely mean to keep on presenting us with hundreds. When he good-naturedly said that you were to go halves with him in what the 'Nun' might win, he probably thought she might pick up one decent stake, but could hardly have supposed that he was the owner of the very best two-year-old of the season—a filly whose winnings are likely to be computed by thousands."

"No, no," rejoined Bessie, "I agree with you, I don't think that could have been his intention; but Uncle John is a man of his word, and sure to stick to it. Still his coming here will give you an excellent opportunity to release him for what he has already done; and tell him we really expect to participate no further in the 'Wandering Nun's' successes."

"You are quite right; I have got a capital first floor for him just over the way, and as soon as he has settled down I'll explain

this to him. He has been very loyal to his promise; many men would have considered a cheque for a hundred quite sufficient redemption of such a pledge."

"He has been very good to us, Maurice. I am no purist, as you know, but Uncle John's present to some extent represents dabbling in the turf. I know, dear, you don't actually, but morally it is otherwise. We will thank Uncle John and have done with it."

Maurice stirred his tea and quietly assented to his wife's proposition. He meant it thoroughly; he wished to disentangle himself from the meshes of the turf; but the abandoning that fascination, except under compulsion, requires rigid resolution, as many a moth who has scorched his wings past redemption at the fatal candle has sadly owned through many succeeding years of exile or poverty. To Maurice it was so easy to continue his interest in it; he could always calm his conscience with the assurance that he never actually staked money on the result, but the excitement of watching what to him was really speculation on its chances was one he would be somewhat loth to forego when it came to the point.

Mr. Richard Madingley had given a great garden-party, which was followed up by a dance in honour of his engagement. The greater part of Tunnleton society was present at this *fête*, and the Enderby scandal, as it had come to be called, was a prominent topic of discussion. The adverse party were much in the ascendant, indeed Maurice could count few friends in that assembly, but he had one powerful one in the person of the Reverend Jacob Jarrow, who had no idea of a curate of his being found fault with by any one but himself.

Mr. Jarrow was a person formidable to combat; his very failings tended to make him an awkward antagonist; his pomposity, self-complacency, and obstinacy were hard to contend with. You can't convince a man who starts with a steady determination that he will not be convinced; ridicule he was impervious to, and in the matter of words, both ponderous and voluminous; you could no more have talked the Reverend Mr. Jarrow down than his church-steeple.

General Maddox, after his last week's experience, kept clear of him, but the irascible Praun could not refrain from dashing in to rescue his wife from a pretty sharp lecture on want of charity towards her neighbours, which, without exactly mentioning Maurice's name, evidently had his story for its text.

"It's all very well, Mr. Jarrow—we all know that you consider a curate of yours can do no wrong—that you decline even to listen to the evidence against him; but you can hardly expect that the unsupported word of the rector of St. Mary's will whitewash Mr. Enderby in the eyes of men of the world. I'm told that you counsel him to bring an action for libel against some of us; I can only say, let him, let him, sir, as far as I am personally concerned;

he will find that more complete exposure is all he will take by that move!"

"I have not only counselled him to do so, but I shall urge him still more strongly to persist in such resolution. People who calumniate their fellow-creatures find themselves mulcted in serious damages in these days; you will perhaps discover, general, that mere statement doesn't constitute evidence;" and with this the rector walked away, with the air of a man who has completely crushed his opponent, most maddening to witness.

"Evidence, forsooth!" exclaimed the enraged general to his wife; "the idea of any parson telling *me*, a man that has sat on hundreds of court-martials, that I don't know what evidence is!" and then the general walked off, fuming and muttering, I am afraid, words not altogether complimentary to the clerical profession generally; but he was soon destined to receive consolation, and, ere he had gone far, he came across his host, who was being excitedly appealed to by some of his fair guests on the subject of Maurice's iniquities.

"You see, you know all about these things, Mr. Madingley; you oughtn't to, and of course you'll give it up when you're married; but you really should be a judge of whether Mr. Enderby really is guilty of gambling."

Dick Madingley, who was by nature relentless in his vengeance, had steadily adhered to his rôle of Iago. He had nothing to say to it; he knew nothing about it; it was no affair of his, but, if you asked him as a man of the world—well, Mr. Enderby had endeavoured to make the most of his information.

"Ah, I am afraid so. It is very sad that a clergyman should give way to such madness," observed Angelina Torkesly, with a deep sigh; "but after what I saw yesterday I am afraid there can be no doubt that Mr. Enderby has yielded to temptation."

And then the fair Angelina, in all the glory of contributing a fresh sauce to the highly-spiced dish of gossip they were discussing, narrated her story of the yellow envelope and the telegraph boy.

Dick Madingley said nothing, but in the eyes of the audience this evidently was an important fact that admitted of no rebutting, and they were expressing their opinion to that effect freely when an unctuous voice boomed upon their ears.

"I would recommend you to be a little more reticent of your opinions, my good people. This accusation is about to become the subject of an action for libel, in which one or two of the leading personages of Tunnleton will figure prominently, and several more have the privilege of entering the witness-box."

A sudden shower could not have more effectually washed out the conversation than the rector's announcement. It was the first society had heard of such a thing as an action for libel being contemplated, and society had a hazy idea of the pains and penalties connected with that style of prosecution; but Tunnleton was prompt to recognize that it was a very unpleasant affair to be

mixed up in. The Reverend Jacob Jarrow had taken up the cudgels with such good will for his curate, that he had quite persuaded himself that this action should be and would be brought, although Maurice had never for one moment hinted at such a course. However, his speech had the effect of dispersing the little knot, and Mr. Jarrow found himself left face to face with his host and with General Praun as the sole auditor of what might pass between them.

"It is very good of you to stand up for your curate, Mr. Jarrow," remarked Dick Madingley, suavely, "but, if you have any influence with him, you had best counsel him to drop this action for libel. He is no friend of mine, or you would see him here to-day, but I don't like to see a man make a fool of himself. I'm the last fellow to find fault with any one for having sporting tastes, but if a man does have a little flutter over a race it's no use telling lies about it. I don't pretend to be a censor of morals at my time of life, but, Mr. Jarrow, if it is wrong for a parson to bet, I can't see that he mends things by denying his having done so."

"You had better be very careful how you reiterate that calumny," said Mr. Jarrow, pompously.

"Had I?" replied Dick Madingley, with an evil gleam in his light blue eyes. "Good! next time you see your model assistant, just ask him this question: Did the telegraph bring you good news from Goodwood on Wednesday?"

"Good gracious, what do mean?" exclaimed Mr. Jarrow.

"Nothing more than I say. Simply ask Mr. Enderby if the telegraph brought him good news from Goodwood on Wednesday. If his answer satisfies you I am willing to retract my recently expressed opinion."

It was a bold *coup* on Richard Madingley's part, for telegrams refer to many other things than racing, and Dick had no idea of what Enderby's telegraph was about really. Still he knew that it was the Goodwood week, and had managed to wring from the telegraph clerk, with whom he was on intimate terms, that it did come from the ducal gathering.

As for the Reverend Mr. Jarrow, he was fairly taken aback, and left, to use nautical parlance, "in irons," and ere he could recover himself his host was gone.

CHAPTER XXII.

JOHN MADINGLEY.

EARLY in the following week John Madingley arrived in Tunlleton. There had been no flourish of trumpets announcing his arrival, the Enderbys had mentioned it to no one, and the

quiet, countrified, old-fashioned clergyman who stepped into the very well-known lodgings that Maurice had secured for him attracted no attention in the first instance. But in a few days Tunnleton awoke to the fact that Mrs. Enderby had got an uncle who had arrived within its gates, and that the name of that uncle was Madingley, and then the gossiping little town literally ran wild with boundless conjecture. What relation was the new-comer to Mr. Richard? How extremely odd, if he was a relation, that Mr. Richard had never alluded to his expected arrival, and then Tunnleton remembered that Richard Madingley had run up to town, on some lawyer's business it was said, and presumably connected with the marriage settlement.

Tunnleton felt mystified, and if there is one thing a provincial town invariably resents and places the worst construction on it is this. An uncle of Mrs. Enderby! then why did the Enderbys keep his approaching advent a secret? Mr. Enderby's ways apparently, like those of "the Heathen Chinee," were peculiar, and once more society shook its head over Maurice's iniquities and came to the conclusion that, as far as Richard Madingley was concerned, despite the uncommonness of the name, they were namesakes but not relatives.

However, there were two people in Tunnleton who did not accept this view of things. Mr. Molecombe the banker, whose daughter was betrothed to Dick Madingley, thought it behoved him to call at all events on one who might prove to be a somewhat important relative of his future son-in-law, and, to say the truth, was not quite so well satisfied in the matter of settlements as a staid business-man should be before he surrendered his daughter to a comparative stranger. Mr. Molecombe came to the grave resolution that he would call. He had sounded his junior partner Frank Chylton pretty severely on this point, but Frank was so indignant at the omission of the Enderbys from the Molecombe garden-party of some few weeks ago, that he steadfastly withheld the information he possessed, and there was growing up gradually in Frank Chylton's mind a doubt as to whether Richard Madingley was quite what he professed to be. He had never even hinted such a thing to Maurice, but it struck him as curious that Richard Madingley seemed quite unaware that Mrs. Enderby's maiden name had been identical with his own, and that she was a niece of the man whose property he professed himself heir to. It had occurred to him of late that Mr. Richard Madingley was perhaps drawing on his imagination when he described himself as heir to that Yorkshire property, and that the succession to it might be more matter of hope than a declared intention on the part of the present proprietor.

The Reverend John Madingley of Bingwell might be a pronounced fact in his own county and in many other places, but in Tunnleton he had been a mere impalpable shadow in which they

took no sort of interest till the arrival of his reputed heir, and even then that Mrs. Enderby was also a relation of the Yorkshire squire and rector had been quite forgotten by the few people who had known it, with the exception of the Chyltons.

Mr. Molecombe in due course presented himself at John Madingley's lodgings, and, in response to the conventional "not at home," desired to see that gentleman's valet, and explained to him that he did not come within the catalogue of ordinary visitors, as his daughter was engaged to be married to Mr. Richard Madingley.

The valet's face was immovable, and his manner most deferential as he listened to the banker's story, but he firmly though politely reiterated that his orders were imperative, that his master was in delicate health, and regretted that he was unable to receive visitors.

Mr. Molecombe retired considerably disappointed. He thought, considering the circumstances, the rector of Bingwell might have made an effort to see him.

There is a great resemblance between humanity and sheep. Despite their first impressions, no sooner was Tunnleton aware that Mr. Molecombe had called, than it occurred to several of the prominent members of Tunnleton society, who had profited by Richard Madingley's hospitality, that it would be perhaps advisable to call upon the new-comer. Mr. Molecombe had, of course, satisfied himself of the relationship before committing himself in this wise. But the same answer was invariably returned which had met the banker on his visit: "Delicate health, and deeply regretted he was unable to receive visitors."

Not reckoning the Enderbys, John Madingley made but one exception to this rule, and that, to the unfeigned astonishment of Tunnleton, was General Shrewster. That he was a self-contained man, and not given to slopping over like a full pail when jogged against, his acquaintance were aware. Still it is very odd that he had never mentioned his acquaintance with the master of Bingwell, whom he must evidently know intimately or he would scarcely have been admitted when he called.

It was quite true, General Shrewster, although near a score of years younger than John Madingley, had been a contemporary of his upon the turf. It was many a year ago since the general had abandoned that fascinating pursuit, but there were plenty of old race-goers even now who could recollect how Captain Shrewster used to "shake the ring;" how he would dash in at the last moment, in the days when men really did bet, and write down three or four pages of his betting-book in about the same time as it has taken the writer to scrawl this paragraph. "It's a treat," an old trainer once remarked, "to put the captain on a good thing, he's the pluckiest bettor I ever saw; and when he goes in, he fairly makes the ring dazed before he snaps his betting-book to again. He has had

them so often and so heavily, they are a bit cowed now when he puts down the pieces in earnest."

Yes; General Shrewster's had been the fate of many another who had started in life with a good property and plenty of ready money. How many thousands he had run through on the turf was a matter only known to his bankers and his solicitor. The large sums that he won by day on the heath were more than swallowed up by the reckless play he indulged in, at the rooms at Newmarket, at night. He had wonderful information, and was a most successful speculator, but reckless after-dinner play at the gaming table would easily dissipate such successes, and the gambling houses of Brighton or the rooms at Doncaster easily swallowed up the winnings of the ducal gathering or successful days on the Town Moor.

It was in those early days that John Madingley had known young Shrewster. It is hardly worth going into, but in those days the then captain had intimate relations with the great Northern stable in which John Madingley trained, and the rector had been attracted towards him from the audacity with which he was wont to back any promising horse of his. They had become great friends; Shrewster had more than once been down to stay at Bingwell. Then came his smash. He had nothing for it but to exchange to India and leave the settlement of his affairs to his solicitor. The result was, a fine fortune became a moderate competence; still upon that and his pension General Shrewster as a bachelor was passing rich in Tunnleton. He never spoke of his past, and that complacent little place, which believed that its knowledge was universal, was quite unaware that the grey-haired veteran, who read the morning papers so placidly, who was never seen in the billiard-room, and rarely even as a looker-on in the card-room, was the Captain Shrewster about whose wondrous turf successes and mad doings all London had rung a quarter of a century ago. You may think yourself a big man, you may flatter yourself that you have made your mark, but to bring yourself to a proper sense of the nothingness of all human ambition there is nothing like a visit to one of those pulseless provincial places. Except you are royalty or the prime minister, there will be slight curiosity regarding you. Swinburne, Wilkie Collins, or Millais run no risk of being mobbed in such towns.

It was not long before Tunnleton arrived at the fact that General Shrewster was admitted by the recluse of Bevan's, as the somewhat ostentatious private hotel where Mr. Madingley had taken up his abode was called, and about this the inquisitive little town marvelled much.

Not an easy man to question, this General Shrewster; could be curt and sarcastic, as more than one social dignitary had discovered, somewhat to his discomfiture. Still, Generals Maddox and Praun, after some talk between themselves, came to the con-

clusion that Mr. Madingley's eccentric seclusion was a thing to be inquired into, and that the information they sought could only be obtained from General Shrewster. But from this latter the two *gobe-mouches* could extract nothing. General Shrewster told them briefly that he had known John Madingley intimately many years ago, that he had come down to Tunnleton for his health, and was not equal to receiving visitors or making fresh acquaintances.

Even General Praun admitted there was no more to be said; it certainly was open to a man to choose whom he would receive in his own house. Still, as the uncle of Dick Madingley, Tunnleton, he did think, had claims, &c., &c., which only went to prove that "there was no more to be said" by no means, as a rule, closed discussion, there being generally plenty more of inaccurate talk to follow that brief announcement.

Maurice and his wife got on capitally with Uncle John. He looked more like an old-fashioned country squire than a clergyman, although his dress was sober enough. He was generally attired in a single-breasted pepper-and-salt coat of slightly sporting cut, drab kerseymere breeches and leggings, and invariably wore a white scarf of matchless fold and immaculate purity. He was evidently fond of Bessie, and no sooner did he discover the fascination the turf had for her husband than he unfolded the lore of past decades for his edification, and about the last fifty years of turf history John Madingley was a combination of racing calendar and biographical dictionary very interesting to listen to for any one whose tastes lay that way. One thing Maurice remarked as strange was that he made no allusion to Richard Madingley, and at first seemed a little taken aback to find that he was established in Tunnleton; afterwards he appeared to have heard all about it, but to take very little interest in Richard or his proceedings.

The following conversation would have created no little excitement in Tunnleton could it have been heard:

"Good morning, Shrewster! It's very good of you to come and cheer up an old friend who has got very near to the end of his tether. I like a gossip with you over the old times of five-and-twenty years ago."

"Yes, Madingley, but it's ended the same way with the lot of us. We plunged and won! We plunged and lost! and the losings always exceeded the winnings by many thousands. My lot was only that of a score of others; you can recollect. You, like a sensible man, raced solely for sport, and when you did bet it was to an extent that never caused you a moment's uneasiness. However, never mind these by-gones. I am glad you like young Enderby. He's a good sort."

"Yes, he is!" returned John Madingley. "He is a very good young fellow; but I tell you what, he is in the wrong groove. That chap will never do any good as a parson. They don't stand

parsons of my stamp now-a-days, and Maurice is no more fitted for the profession he has chosen than I am, though all the same I have been more conscientious than the world gives me credit for."

"You are quite right," rejoined Shrewster. "Enderby would make a rattling good dragoon, but he will never do any good in his present vocation."

"Well," interposed Mr. Madingley quickly, "he is not committed to it yet, and he is young enough to change, and I shouldn't mind helping him a little in some other line if he liked."

"And what would your heir say to that?" inquired General Shrewster slyly.

John Madingley threw himself back in his chair, and burst into a roar of laughter.

"Ah," he said at length, "what a commotion there will be in Tunnleton when they come to the rights of that story; in the course of a few days Scotland Yard will no doubt have reckoned this gentleman up for us; but, as I told you before, as for his being my heir, why I never even heard of the fellow before. He may have a right to the name of Madingley, but he is most assuredly no connection of mine. You tell me he is engaged to a girl in this town, a daughter of that banker fellow who called upon me. I don't mean to see him, but I shall certainly before I leave Tunnleton let him know that his intended son-in-law is flying false colours. But in the meanwhile, Shrewster, not a word to any one. I know I can trust you."

"Yes, I know how to keep my tongue between my teeth, and now I'm going to say good-bye. You look tired, and will be all the better for a snooze before dinner. Good-bye." And with a warm pressure of the hand the two old friends separated.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT THE "BRISTOL" RESTAURANT.

IF there was one man at Tunnleton who felt uncomfortable about the position of things it was Mr. Molecombe. His daughter had heard several times from her *fiancé*, but Richard Madingley always wound up by regretting that the well-known dilatory ways of solicitors still detained him in town. That was nothing compared to a rebuff he had received from John Madingley. Not content with that gentleman's "not at home," he had thought fit to write to him to explain Richard Madingley's relation to his daughter, and the rector of Bingwell's reply had thrown the banker into a cold perspiration. John Madingley had curtly answered that his health precluded his receiving visitors, and that he

had nothing to say to Richard Madingley's matrimonial arrangements.

A more uncomfortable answer it was scarce possible to get from a man who stood *in loco parentis* to that of a proposed son-in-law. A second letter elicited no answer whatever, and, though Mr. Molecombe as yet kept his own counsel, he was nevertheless seriously discomposed about the aspect of affairs. It was a puzzle beyond his comprehension. His intended son-in-law had vanished from Tunnleton simultaneously with the advent of the relative from whom he professed to expect his heritage; that might have been accident, but it was singular that he should not return, nor apparently have been aware of the Yorkshire rector's coming. Then, again, John Madingley's note, and the ground he had apparently taken up, were by no means reassuring. Elderly gentlemen invariably expected to be consulted and deferred to about their heirs' matrimonial intentions, more especially when such elderly gentlemen's property was entirely at their own disposal. Mr. Madingley apparently did not. One solution only of this was possible to the banker's mind, namely, that the rector of Bingwell most thoroughly disapproved of the whole affair and intended to countenance it as little as might be. This would account for Dick Madingley's apparent embarrassment about the settlements. There were difficulties probably between himself and his uncle's lawyers, for, despite the fact that Richard Madingley had only given himself out as a cousin of the well-known Yorkshire "Squarson," Tunnleton, from the moment they had grasped the fact (rather late in the day) that the owner of Bingwell was to some extent a man of moneyed notability, had insisted on that relationship, and their disgust when this clergyman of the north declined to appear and be worshipped was considerable. Still, let Tunnleton think what it liked, there were two points which there was no getting over. The Reverend John Madingley adhered strictly to his determination to see nobody—while, curiously enough, his relative and heir was apparently unable to return from London. Mr. Molecombe was much too prudent to show any concern about this, but at the same time both he and his family felt extremely uncomfortable about the turn things had taken. Edith Molecombe, indeed, shrank as far as possible from receiving visitors of any sort. She could say with truth that she heard nearly every other day from her *fiancé*—that his letters were dated from the Bristol Hotel, but that he was still detained in London by those bothering lawyers; all very well this on the surface, but Mr. Molecombe could not but see that within such easy distance from town as Tunnleton was it was very possible for an enamoured young man to run down for a day or so to see his sweetheart, more especially when such an opportunity of presenting his bride-elect to the man who stood to him in place of a father had occurred. It would almost seem as if John

Madingley had run down to Tunnleton for that express purpose, and yet Richard seemed to have disappeared as if to controvert it.

Could Mr. Molecombe have looked in at the Bristol Restaurant one evening, his eyes might not only have been opened, but have been fetched pretty nearly out of his head. Trifling over his dessert with a still unfinished bottle of dry champagne at his right hand, was a slight, wiry, dark-faced, clean-shaven man, allowing himself only the smallest modicum of mutton-chop whisker. A man about whose age it was hopeless to conjecture. He might be either prematurely old or extraordinarily young for his time of life, but he was at all events eating the best hot-house peaches and drinking the best *brut* brand the "Bristol" could furnish, with a *nonchalance* that betokened the most perfect indifference to the amount of his dinner-bill. While he was leisurely picking his teeth, a man clothed in faultless evening attire, with immaculate white tie, who had been apparently so far condescendingly superintending the other waiters, approached his table with a deferential bow and said:

"I hope, Mr. Pick, I hope your dinner has been satisfactory."

"Hallo, Dick! thought you had made your pile and started something of this kind on your own account."

"Well, Mr. Pick, I did get a tidy lot together, and I undoubtedly had a very good time last year, still I did not think it quite good enough to cut this place; my berth here, as you know, is an exceedingly good one; they are excessively liberal in the matter of leave, in fact really three days a week is as much supervision as they demand from me. I have been in the country a bit for the benefit of my health."

Mr. Pick received this statement with a low whistle and a closure of the left eye that might have been deemed almost insulting by sensitive people.

Richard Madingley continued in the same unmoved tone:

"Things haven't been quite so rosy this season so far; you have always been very good to me, Mr. Pick, and I thought I could rely upon you thoroughly for information about the North Country stables."

"So you can, Dick, you have always known all I know."

"What about this 'Wandering Nun,' then? You never gave me a hint about *her*, Mr. Pick."

"No," replied the saturnine gentleman irritably. "Dash it, how could I? Those cursed Kilburnes kept the thing so confoundedly dark that there wasn't a soul in the north knew anything about her except perhaps old Madingley and one or two of his cronies. They never let you know, and old Kilburne and his son think a deal before they lay out a pony between 'em, but they have got a flyer, no mistake about it. I have learnt it much

too late to collar the loaf; but you had better follow my lead and go in for the crumbs."

"My expenses have been very heavy this season, Mr. Pick."

"Your expenses!" retorted the other contemptuously, "your expenses be damned! Look here, Dick Bushman: I promised your mother to give you a hand, as far as I could, before she died, and I've done it: I'm not particular. No man who makes the turf his vocation can afford to be mealy-mouthed, but you certainly have no call to heave rocks at me. I got you your appointment here, better than that of most clerks in government offices as far as money and work go: I've given you the office whenever I've been in the swim myself, and you come here whining to me about your expenses and not being advertised of the 'Wandering Nun.' D——n it, sir, live on the two pounds a week you will probably command if they turn you off here without a character, and don't trouble me any more!"

"Pray don't mistake me, Mr. Pick. If you would allow me to conduct you to a private room while I explain, and condescend to accept a glass of champagne and a cigar from me, you will be quite satisfied."

"Well, Dick, I could do another pint of 'pop' and a tidy cigar. You ain't a fool, and if you don't rough me up the wrong way I'm good to stand to you still, but that 'Wandering Nun' is a devilish sore subject; there hasn't been such a good thing as that come out of Yorkshire in my time without my knowing all about it: but the Kilburnes, having no real speculators connected with them, had no trouble about keeping this dark; a few hundreds would represent the investments of Mr. Brooks, his friends and his trainer. But come along and you shall tell me what you've been doing."

Mr. Pick, now a notable member of the ring, had begun life as a footman. The antecedents of the knights of the pencil are mysterious as those of the members of the Stock Exchange; they have their ascension, culmination, and decline, their zenith and their nadir; comet-like they cross the sky and disappear into the obscurity of poverty or sparkle with the temporary effulgence of wealth. Mr. Pick at present gravitated between these points, but he was a philosopher, and, when he could not afford the tariff of the "Bristol," was content with a cut off the joint at a luncheon-bar, though, like most of his vocation, he always lived luxuriously when in feather.

Dick led the way to a snug, disengaged dining-room, in which one of his subordinates was already busy manipulating the cork of a champagne bottle.

"Well, I haven't seen much of you lately," remarked Mr. Pick, as he sipped his wine with infinite gusto; "what have you been doing?"

"I've been doing the swell and setting up as a gentle-

man of property: never mind where, but not very far from town."

"Yes, you're good at that game, as I know from experience; you can do the pretty and put the side on, Dick, so as to pass for the real article, unless the liquor gets the best of you, and then, like the rest of us, you are apt to display the weaknesses of your past; you've a command of strong language which you're a little disposed to make use of when you're sprung—that's injudicious. Well, did you have a good time? Did you make it pay?"

"Not quite: but if I could raise a few hundreds more I should have made a good thing of it. I was fairly established as one of the swells of the place and engaged to the daughter of the leading banker there."

"What, you, to a real lady, with money?"

"Just so," rejoined Dick rather sharply; "there's nothing very wonderful in that; I'm not bad-looking, you know; they all think that I'm comfortably off and that I'm a gentleman."

The other ejected a cloud of tobacco-smoke, and then, with a significant wink, observed:

"Right you are; a real out-and-outer; but you've a past, Master Dick, that respectable people would look upon as somewhat dubious."

"When the respectable people don't know it that matters little," replied Dick Madingley; "but I wanted to see you, and that is the principal reason that brought me to London."

"Campaign not been profitable as yet, eh?" rejoined Mr. Pick.

"No, but just on the point of becoming so."

"Like 'em all, like 'em all," replied the bookmaker softly. "Like myself, like the beggars who are always on the verge of discovering how to make gold or diamonds, or their fortune. We're always pounded for that other five hundred pounds or so. If we had had that odd hundred or so to plunge with, what a lot of us would be driving in carriages instead of wearing our soles out. The end of your moving history is, you want money and can I find it?"

Dick nodded. He knew his man, and, though Mr. Pick might philosophize himself, words were quite wasted upon him as a matter of business. He would never have attained the very tolerable turf position he held had he not been both hard-headed and practical. The advancing of a little money where he saw his way to tolerable security, for exorbitant interest, was quite within his province.

"You know I have been doing tolerably well, or you wouldn't see me here; but you also know I'm the last man to go into a speculation blindfold. You'll have to show your hand, my boy."

"And that is none so easy to do. You would want to know what the young lady's fortune was to be."

"Naturally. I've to recover my money and be liberally recompensed for the accommodation," rejoined Mr. Pick gravely.

"That's just the rub. My proposed father-in-law is somewhat anxious to do the same thing with regard to myself."

The bookmaker gave vent to a low whistle.

"Under those circumstances," he said, at last, "I think I may say this match won't come off. At all events, it don't sound good enough for this child to risk money on."

"It will come off fast enough if I am not stranded for a few hundreds of ready coin. They all believe down there I'm of a good Yorkshire family, and heir to a nice property."

"A rather credulous population down there, wherever it is," remarked Mr. Pick, with a sneer. "And now, before we go any further, where is it?"

"Time enough for you to know when you tell me you're good to advance me four or five hundred to carry on the war."

"It is no use, Dick; when those Parliament swells come to the House for supplies, they have to condescend to particulars, and so will you before I part with a 'mag.'"

"I must have the money or chuck the thing up," replied Dick Madingley. "You would have to know it sooner or later, and as I can't well play the game without a confederate, perhaps the sooner I take you into my confidence the better. I am down at Tunnleton, and living in one of the best bachelor residences in the town."

"I say, isn't that risky? Weren't you afraid of being spotted?"

"No, the 'Bristol' is a little above Tunnleton form, and, as for racing, well, Tunnleton talks a good deal about it, but, bar Epsom, don't know its way to a race-course."

"Any crumbs to be picked up there?" inquired Mr. Pick.

"No; it's not worth while exposing your game at sixpenny pool, nor your knowledge of whist at shilling points—besides it would have been all against the game I was playing to be counted anything but a fair performer in those lines."

"Good, very good!" remarked the bookmaker. "There's nothing like understanding when one's little talents are best kept in the background. Or else, Dick, amongst yokels, you're likely to do well at those amusements."

"Well, you agree with me," replied the other impatiently; "fishing for gudgeon is waste of time when there are salmon in the pool. Will you stand to me?"

"I'll come down and have a look at the thing, anyway. You can put me up for a day or two?"

"I'll put you up for a week or two, if you will make up as an old-fashioned sporting pastor and call yourself my uncle."

"What, the fellow with the property in Yorkshire?" exclaimed Mr. Pick.

"That's it. I want you to represent old John Madingley of Bingwell. He's an old man who never goes out of his own county, and they know nothing about him in Tunnleton."

"Never goes out of Yorkshire, don't he? By heavens, Dick! I saw him at Goodwood last week. The old man came all the way to see his 'Wandering Nun' win the 'Ham.'"

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

BY MRS. HUMPHRY.

LONDON was long in following the lead of Paris with regard to first-night representations at principal theatres, but there is now little to complain of in that respect. The audiences that assemble at the Lyceum, the St. James', the Haymarket, the Prince of Wales', the Savoy, the Comedy, the Royal Court, and on special occasions at other theatres when a piece is played for the first time, is a kind of concentration of what is in many senses the best of London Society. The cream of literature, the arts, rank and fashion is to be seen in the stalls and private boxes, while the pit and gallery are occupied by those keenly discerning "first-nighters," who have rubbed their wits to sharpness by constant practice in their self-imposed task of criticism. Incompetence finds no mercy at their hands, and even the highest art fares badly if accompanied by any token of conceit or pomposity.

The first night of Mrs. Bernard-Beere's impersonation of "Lena Despard" at the Opera Comique was a brilliant occasion of the kind. To say that the audience was as interesting as the play would perhaps appear to be undervaluing the latter; but if I could only mention the names of some score or two of the individuals composing the former, there would be seen to be no exaggeration. During the intervals between the acts every one looked at every one else, though when the curtain was up attention was riveted upon the stage. Mrs. Bernard-Beere has never been so well fitted with a character as she now is in Mr. Phillips' heroine at the Opera Comique. "As in a Looking Glass," the title of the play, may be hoped to be a misnomer, for there cannot be many women so absolutely heartless and so wholly unscrupulous as Lena Despard. That she is fascinating and enchains the attention, even in the book and apart from the charm of Mrs. Bernard-Beere's impersonation, is due to sheer skill on the part of the author. He makes the reader see how pretty she is, how graceful, how outwardly sympathetic, and in some incomprehensible fashion he throws across her path (perhaps in the shape of Jack Fortinbras) the heavy shadow of her tragic end. She is never light-hearted or girlish for a single moment. Her smiles are on the surface. No one could believe, without having seen, to what perfection Mrs. Bernard-Beere interprets this difficult character, no how she wins the sympathy of the audience for the cold-hearted

and calculating Lena. The grace of her movements is accentuated by the beauty of her dresses, which show the inimitable Paris touch in the manipulation of the drapery and the flow of the folds. When she appeared in the most poetic of floating, fur-edged primrose tea-gowns, flower-decked heads leaned towards each other in the stalls to whisper notes of admiration. Perhaps the tan-coloured Monte Carlo dress was the one that aroused the chief envy in feminine hearts. "If I could find out who made it, I would have one exactly like it"—how many among the audience thought that!

Later in the same evening came the costume ball and masque of painters at the Royal Institute. Looked back upon from the distance of two or three weeks, it comes back to the memory like a kaleidoscope of historic figures. This was no ball of fancy dress, with endless Snows, Twilights, Nights, Stars, and Sunsets. The styles were restricted to those illustrative of some period of history, and a very complete panorama of the eras of clothing was provided in consequence. Ladies of ancient Greece and Rome conversed with English cavaliers and French kings. A stalwart Roundhead made his bow to a mediæval lady in a "side-gowne;" while a Mexican gentleman of not a hundred years ago danced to the music of a modern waltz, composed this year, with a lady of Venice who dated from the fourteenth century.

The gavotte was a much prettier sight than were the tableaux, and it was a matter for regret that it was not danced upon a raised dais, so that all might see the graceful play of fan, turn of head and curve of neck that form such prominent features in the old-world dance.

The pavane is to be the next revival from the ball-rooms of by-gone times. To dance in character, the performers should wear Louis XIII. dresses, with their large-puffed sleeves and wide vandyked lace turned back from the shoulders and drooping over the arms. The over-dress and petticoat would not be any novelty in these days of Louis XV. gowns, and the lace wired high at the back of the neck would be becoming to many and by no means a startling innovation. The style of hair, however, would be rather trying. The coiffure of that period was perfectly flat on the top. The back hair was arranged round a comb, while a thick bunch of curls hung over either ear, concealing both. The buckled or rosetted shoes, with pointed toes and high heels, are familiar enough to us all.

The men's dress is sufficiently picturesque, with silk stockings, rosetted shoes, knee-breeches ending in a frill of rich lace and tied with ribbons at the knee, tight jacket of silk or velvet, with slashed sleeves and short coat hanging loose from the shoulders. Their deep cavalier collars and long love-locks are inseparably connected in our minds with a later period of our own island history.

The dance itself is a graceful one, with much sinuous turning and

twisting of the dancers, many sliding steps, deep curtseys and pretty pointed toe brought up to the recover. The music is in triple time, like that of the minuet, and the first remarkable feature in the dance is the starting off of two out of each four couples to the very end of the room in the minuet step, and their slow dance back again to place themselves as *vis-à-vis* to the other two couples. Immediately after the latter set off on a similar expedition, returning to their original positions. This preliminary canter concluded, the real business of the dance begins, strangely enough, by scattering the four couples to the very extremities of the room. Brought together again in the centre, still holding hands, they content themselves with a more limited space, ranging themselves as though for a quadrille. The third figure is a pretty one, but one in which men in modern costume would probably feel themselves to be ridiculous. Each gentleman kneels on one knee, his sword well out at the back, his right hand resting—palm upwards—on his right knee. Each lady, taking a scrap of her over-dress in each hand, sets off with the left foot and glides coquettishly in front of the partner opposite her own in a diagonal direction. Then the men rise, lady and cavalier making each other a low reverence, the whole four couples in the same moment. Much of the beauty of this figure consists in the curtsey being made exactly simultaneously by the eight dancers. This was the only point in which the dancers at the costume ball failed in their gavotte. Some of them were rising after their low bow, at the moment when others were making the descent.

This reverence over, the cavaliers go down again on one knee, while the ladies dance off, each arriving before her very own partner, when there are fresh curtseys, the men rising and giving their right hands to the ladies, who pirouette without letting go the hand, being supported by the other arm of their partners, which is passed round their waist. In the last figure the four dancers form a circle by taking hands, and then letting go, but still holding the arms raised high in the air, each couple turns to each other with a step to the right and then one to the left, repeating this double movement four times. After this each couple stands ranged behind the first, and dances off out of the room by a door on the opposite side to that by which they danced into it.

It will be seen that no ordinary ballroom will suffice for this rather exigent revival from old-world days, or rather nights. We are further threatened with a tarentelle, which is to be danced by eight couples in Italian dress. This is to be swift and animated, in contradistinction to the stately movements of the gavotte and minuet.

The Ascot of the Jubilee Year was a brilliant one, especially on the Cup day, which was favoured by weather as bright as the occasion. Dark skies and rain-clouds had prevented the appearance of summer dresses and diaphanous bonnets previous to Ascot

week, but all was atoned by the favourable chance vouchsafed by the clerk of the climate on *the* Thursday. Such embroideries as were displayed have never been surpassed. Unfortunately the great bulk of these exquisite embroideries are done abroad, where greater neatness of detail and beauty of finish is bestowed upon the work than seems to come within the range of our home-workers. A lady who wished to encourage English trade gave some embroideries to be copied, and was rewarded for her patriotic endeavours by a series of calamities caused by loose stitches and dropping beads. Showers of the latter fell from her when she moved, mute witnesses to the incapacity of her countrywomen. Why should this be? Could it possibly be caused by an unselfish desire on the part of the British workwoman not to eclipse the British workman? The very smallest amount of industry, conscientiousness and patient endeavour would be sufficient to throw the male worker into the shade, and perhaps his wife and daughter are unwilling to rise superior to the wont of the family head.

The coolest of pale mauves and the softest of green were to be seen on the lawn at Ascot. Heliotrope, grey and white were the colours most favoured. Only the pale tints of heliotrope were successful when unrelieved by white or cream. Embroidered lawns and zephyrs in this delightful tint looked well, and suited the brightness of the day and the festivity of the occasion, contrasting well with the stately heaviness of velvets, brocades, and satins. White satin formed the foundation of a great number of the Ascot dresses. Over this material was draped almost every kind of material in white, cream-colour, pale pink, primrose, coral-tints, and cool amber. Oriental embroideries, alternating with stripes of openwork, showed the glimmer of the satin between the close-set stitches. As a rule, the paler the tint the more successful was the dress. The small bonnets, perched on three hairs, were smart in proportion to their smallness, and the best-dressed of the visitors to the grand stand had made a point of having their sunshades matched to their bonnets. Airiest of drawn crêpe parasols made pretence to keep off the sun from bonnets as airy. On one sunshade hovered a cloud of butterflies, of every colour, from the many-hued emperor to the flower-like blue and the tintless white. A butterfly bonnet was visible at intervals beneath this canopy of pale pink crêpe, so softly edged with grey. The very lightest of white gauzes, embroideries and laces are this season whipped to a sort of frothy cream, and christened sunshades. Exquisite imitations of real flowers in silk and filoselle are wrought upon delicate lisse or net, and the whole is embellished with knots of ribbon matching the colour of the flowers. The handles are often flat in shape, and the fashionable mode of holding them—for there is a fashion in even so trivial a thing as this—is to catch them tightly up

near the wires, and to keep the sunshade well down over the bonnet or hat.

There has seldom of late years been a fuller season than the present. The principal streets at the West End are blocked three or four times daily. Every one seems bent on celebrating, in some fashion or other, the jubilee year of Her Majesty's reign. With some this only means that they spend more on their dresses and bonnets. Everything serves as a pretext for a new gown, just as everything in certain countries, which shall be nameless, serves as an "excuse for the glass."

With others, jubilee is simply a word for advertisements, and in this sense the most loyal of our good queen's subjects are exceedingly weary of it. Others, who are wedded to philanthropic works, do more than ever for the widow and the orphan, thus celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our monarch's accession in the very best of all excellent ways.

Country cousins, who are flocking to town in shoals, may like a word of counsel as to where to go and what to see. Let them by no means miss "The Red Lamp," at the Comedy; "Dorothy," with its bright and tuneful music, at the Prince of Wales'; "Held by the Enemy" at the Princess's, or "Lady Clancarty" at the St. James's; "Dandy Dick" at the Royal Court Theatre, will give them a "splendid laugh;" nor must they omit to go to the Prince's Hall to hear the charming recitations given by Miss Adelaide Detchon, a young American lady with the sweetest voice, the most graceful figure and the most girlishly pretty face in the world. Seen against a background of Liberty draperies, lit up with tinted fairy lights and verdant with tall palms, she charms the eye as much as her voice delights the ear.

It is scarcely necessary to advise the country cousins not to forget to look in at the shop windows, and, if possible, to remain on in "the little village" till July is a trifle on the wane, for then the bargains of this jubilee year will be visible behind plate glass in endless variety.

A MODERN POLYPHEME.

A FLASH of colour through the trees,
A step upon the trembling plank,
A white sail flapping in the breeze,
And then, a maiden leaves the bank.

Each day I watch her, and she guides
Her little boat with dexterous hand,
And, like a river-goddess, rides
In gracious triumph through the land.

I watch her as she lightly tacks,
And marvel at the art which steers
Her boat into the quiet "backs,"
And sorrow when it disappears.

Who, in the summer evening, knows
What gentle feelings fill her breast,
Or near what bower the water flows
Which bears her dingey to its rest !

Perchance a lover, dark and tall,
Awaits her in some flowery nook,
And gazing at her, gathers all
Her thoughts, as from an open book.

Perchance—I have not learnt her name,
I know not where her home may be,
For one brief space alone I claim
Her beauty, as she passes me.

For then the Heaven-winged dreams, which smile
And fade with youth's first golden hour,
Come back, and soothe my soul awhile,
Like perfume from a vanished flower.

And so I watch for her, nor care
Where Acis tarries, down the stream ;
Enough to see her—I forswear
Thy dark emotions, Polypheme.

C. RADFORD.

LONDON SOCIETY.

AUGUST, 1887.

A LIFE INTEREST.

By MRS. ALEXANDER,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOLING O'T," "AT BAY," "BY WOMAN'S WIT," ETC.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARJORY TAKES COUNSEL.

THE young man turned sharply with an astonished glance, which quickly changed into a look of delighted recognition: "Why, Marjory, where have you sprung from? How did you come here?"

"I am staying near this—but oh, Dick, are you really a workman? Do you carry a hod?"

"I have got beyond that; I am getting on, and I am right glad to see you have escaped as well as myself."

"Only for a little while, Dick," shaking her head. "Oh, can you not come away and tell me everything? I have missed you so dreadfully, and wondered so often what you were doing."

A smile lit up Dick's face, as he said, "Have you?"

During the rapid interchange of these sentences, Mr. Carteret stood in speechless astonishment, which changed rapidly to indignation as he perceived his precious sketch-book and pencil-case on the ground, where Marjory had dropped them on recognizing Dick, the former lying open and some loose leaves scattered about.

"This is a very extraordinary and romantic *rencontre*," he said to Ellis, who stood beside him looking on with quiet critical curiosity. "Really, Marjory is too utterly unconventional. See how all these fellows are staring!" Then advancing, he exclaimed, "I wish, Marjory, you could be a little less demonstrative and impetuous; I have no doubt the points of my pencils are broken, and all my loose sketches are tumbling in the dust."

"Well, I could not help it!" cried Marjory, who was for the moment exalted far beyond the fear of consequences. "You see I was so surprised to see Dick, I forgot about everything else."

"That is very evident. Pray may I ask who 'Dick' is?" asked Mr. Carteret in a slightly contemptuous tone which stung Marjory.

"He is my brother, my half-brother. I have not seen him or heard of him for ages, and I was so glad."

"Naturally," put in Ellis; "Miss Acland is, I am sure, a staunch friend."

Dick turned to him, undisturbed by being thus suddenly brought into notice. "You are right," he said emphatically. "I will not keep you, Marge, I have too long a story to tell; I will write to you, and come and see you, if I may? Where shall I address?"

"Oh! I wish you could come *now*!" cried Marjory, looking up to him with moist eyes.

"Well, I can't, you see."

"Then write soon, soon," said Marjory earnestly; "I am staying with my uncle, Mr. Carteret, at the Priory—Langford Priory."

"I know it. Good-bye, Marjory, it is jolly to see you again;" and Marjory was obliged to return to her uncle.

Ellis meantime had picked up the sketch-book and continued to carry it, Marjory being too much agitated to notice that or anything else.

"Pray how comes it that this young man is in such a—a very extraordinary position? I am afraid he is a ne'er-do-weel," asked Mr. Carteret.

"He is nothing of the kind!" cried Marjory indignantly. "He is as good and steady as he can be. He quarrelled with his mother, and he hated being in my father's office, so he went away to seek his fortune."

"He appears to have been eminently successful in his search," remarked Ellis quietly.

"He will be successful, *that* I am quite sure," returned Marjory, with calm assurance. "But it must be rather dreadful, working as he does with common men, though Dick would be vexed if he heard me call *any* one common."

"Hum, a young radical, I suppose, in addition to his other qualities," growled Uncle Carteret.

But Marjory did not heed him, she had turned and looked back. "I think he is taller than ever!" she exclaimed, as if speaking out her thoughts; then Ellis knew their eyes had met, for she brightened all over with a vivid smile and waved her hand. "I am sorry I dropped your book, uncle, but I do not think there is any harm done," she said, as if with an effort.

"That is not your fault," returned Mr. Carteret testily.

Marjory did not seem to hear him. She was too excited and exhilarated by this sudden encounter to heed what was going on about her. Dick did not look ill, or worn, or unhappy; on the contrary, he was bright, embrowned and cheerful, more cheerful than she had ever seen him before; nay, there was something assured and dignified in his bearing, that seemed to ennoble his workman's

garb. "He looks like a gentleman, in spite of his clothes," was her most definite impression; "now, if George comes down and they see each other, if we are together even for a day, how delightful it will be! I ought to have a letter from George to-morrow morning. I will not say a word about meeting Dick when I write home." While she so communed with herself, mixing past, present, and future in her chequered musing, a gentleman joined Mr. Carteret and Ellis, a short, broad, keen-eyed man, roughly dressed in a tweed suit and a soft felt hat. Marjory was roused by her uncle's voice saying sharply:

"Marjory, Marjory! Lord Beaulieu is speaking to you."

"Oh, yes, I beg your pardon!" she exclaimed, colouring and smiling a sweet deprecating smile, "I did not hear."

"I was asking if this is your first visit to Beaulieu," said Lord Beaulieu good-naturedly.

"Yes! I have often wished to come, but had no one to come with. It is very beautiful, and when finished——"

"My occupation will be o'er," put in Lord Beaulieu smiling. His voice was refined and pleasing and made his hearers forget the plainness of his exterior. "In a week or so I shall be able to show you the chapel; at present it is a mass of confusion, you could form no idea of it." Then turning to Mr. Carteret he continued: "It has been tedious work, and I have been obliged to take several of the men away to finish some apartments for my sister, Mrs. Maynard, who thinks her native air may do her good."

"I trust she is regaining strength and spirits," said Ellis, with an air of interest.

"I have not seen her for some time; but I believe she is rousing up a little. It was an awful blow to be left a widow after little more than a year of marriage. The baby, of course, is a great consolation. My sister married young Maynard of Leighton Abbot, who broke his neck out hunting, last March," continued Lord Beaulieu, explaining to Mr. Carteret. "It was a melancholy business—they were very happy and everything promised well. The son and heir was about six weeks old when his father was killed."

"Very unfortunate indeed," said Mr. Carteret, in a polite tone. "This infant, then, is heir to a large property? I remember the curious circumstances of old Maynard's will, under which the present man took the estate."

"The worst of it is, poor young Maynard's father cannot bear his little grandson out of his sight, and the mother will not leave him; so she is buried alive in that big desolate place in Yorkshire. Her father-in-law does not like her to go anywhere except here. He has an idea I shall never marry, and that my small nephew may be the heir of Beaulieu as well as of Leighton Abbot. Now, Mr. Carteret, you must come round to the principal front, and give me your opinion on one or two slight changes I have made in the general design."

"My poor judgment is quite at your service," said Mr. Carteret complacently; and they walked on, Lord Beaulieu pointing out whatever he considered worthy of notice, and his companion happy in being able to detect various faults.

Marjory and Ellis followed in silence.

"May I intrude upon your thoughts?" asked the latter, after studying her face with impunity, perceiving that she was scarcely conscious of what was going on around her.

Marjory looked at him with a slight start, as if waking from a dream. She had not taken in the sense of his words.

"May I speak to you?" resumed Ellis, laughing. "Your spirit was so evidently absent, I hesitated to bring you back from your, I presume, happy memories."

"No—not at all happy!" said Marjory, with a quick sigh.

"Ah! well, I daresay it was a little trying to find your brother in workman's garb."

"It was not that altogether, but he has been badly treated. I have been very unkind to him myself; and now——" she stopped abruptly.

"You are repentant, and wish to atone for the wrong you have done. I am glad to hear it, for I may hope you will feel remorse later on for your consistent and undeserved bad treatment of myself."

"I never behaved badly to you; and I am sure it would be no great matter if I had. You will go away soon, and I shall never see you again."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Ellis, in a low tone; but Marjory did not heed him.

"Dick was always good and patient; and he had not a friend in the world but George—except my father perhaps," she went on, "while you——"

"Are not good, and have heaps of friends," put in Ellis as she stopped.

"I daresay you are very good. Indeed!" turning to him with a sudden burst of gratitude, "you have been good to me. If you had not backed me up about George, Uncle Carteret would not have invited him here. And if I have the great pleasure of seeing both my brothers together, it will be chiefly owing to you."

Her eyes softened as she looked kindly at him.

"If tenderness touched her, the dark of her eye
At once took a deeper, a heavenlier dye,"

quoted Ellis, smiling, while his own gaze grew more intense. "When you understand your own powers better, you will know that your strength does not lie in the fiery indignation you sometimes display, but in the melting mood which is—shall I say—irresistible?"

Marjory did not answer. She felt hurt, without exactly knowing

why. His mocking tone jarred upon her present excited mood, on her tender regretful recollections. She looked down, while her cheek flushed and her lip quivered.

"You are displeased," said Ellis, watching her. "I have said nothing to deserve your displeasure. Seriously, I want to be good friends with you, and my assistance is not to be despised. You will want to see this brother sometimes, and I will help you, in this or any other case."

"Thank you," murmured Marjory; but she did not quite like his mixing himself in her affairs. She wanted no one to come between her and Dick, or to show off his fine gentleman airs to the brother who had for the present laid aside his social position.

Ellis looked at her as if about to speak again, but checked himself. They had now joined Lord Beaulieu and Mr. Carteret, who were standing before the chief entrance, deep in an argument respecting the transition from Norman to Early English style, most of which was Greek to Marjory, but in which Ellis occasionally entered, with evident knowledge of what he was talking about. At last, Mr. Carteret thought of looking at his watch, and declared it was time to start on their homeward track.

"I hope you will come again soon," said Lord Beaulieu, "when the interior will be sufficiently advanced to allow of your forming some idea of what it will be. I was fortunate to fall in with a very clever and exceedingly Bohemian artist in the Pyrenees last year—I had met him in America before—and he has designed some excellent decorations for the principal rooms. I hope Mrs. Carteret and Miss Acland will drive over also, my sister will be very glad to see both ladies indeed; she had the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Carteret in Italy."

"Mrs. Carteret would be charmed," her husband was sure, "and Lord Beaulieu would be so good as to excuse plain speaking, but in matters of taste——"

"Mr. Carteret's is unimpeachable," put in Lord Beaulieu, who accompanied his visitors across the park before taking leave of them.

* * * * *

Marjory was too excited to fall asleep as she generally did as soon as her head was on the pillow, the night after this *rencontre*. She lay long awake, thinking over the past, and seeing bright impossible visions of the future.

But to-morrow morning brought disappointment. There was no letter from George when Mr. Carteret opened the post bag at breakfast and distributed its contents. Ellis raised his eyebrows with a questioning sympathetic expression, as he watched Marjory's expectant look change to one of discomfiture.

"So he is not coming to-day?" said Ellis, strolling into the library a few minutes after Marjory had settled to her usual work.

She shook her head. "I suppose Mrs. Acland is contriving to delay him."

"Why should she take that trouble?"

"I do not know; probably to annoy *me*."

"You dislike her very much; one can see that, though you say little. Don't you think she would be a very stupid woman to waste her energies on so small an object?"

"It seems so. Yet she always tried to keep George away from me. He is rather good friends with her, which is annoying;" she stopped abruptly, feeling it would not do to allow herself too much licence on this exciting topic, especially to one whom she vaguely distrusted.

"And you have no tidings of the other either?" pursued Ellis, seating himself at a small writing-table in one of the windows, and setting forth pens, ink, and paper.

"What? From Dick? No, I did not expect to hear from him so soon;" a pause.

"Do you mind my writing my letters here?" was his next question. "If I disturb you I can write elsewhere."

"I do not mind at all, if you do not speak."

"Thank you, in spite of your unsociable proviso."

"I will not speak to you, so we need not disturb each other."

Ellis bent his head in silent acquiescence, and for some time profound quiet reigned. Ellis had rapidly penned two or three letters, and Marjory had copied a couple of slips which contained the names of those volumes classified under E and F into the catalogue she was making.

At length Ellis, who had glanced at her occasionally, noting how absorbed she was in her work, laid down his pen, and asked, "May I speak?"

"Yes," returned Marjory shortly, without looking up.

"I am a good deal puzzled about this half-brother of yours. You are the daughter of your father's first wife. Where does this young man come in? for he is a good deal older than you."

"Mrs. Acland was a widow, and Dick is *her* son."

"Oh! I see. Then in fact he is not your half-brother, he is no relation at all."

"Is he not? I imagine he must be a sort of brother—at any rate I consider him one now, though I disliked him so much at first and treated him as an intruder."

"How long is it since your father married?"

"Rather more than seven years."

"I suppose Mrs. Acland is handsome? This young fellow is good-looking."

"I thought him ugly when I saw him first. He was all legs and arms, and was so dull and heavy, I was dreadfully unkind to him."

"What is his name?"

"Cranston."

"Cranston," repeated Ellis, "I seem to know the name. What induced him *really* to leave a comfortable home for so unsuitable an occupation?" looking keenly at her.

But for his searching eyes, Marjory might have told the whole story in her eagerness for sympathy, and her indignation at the wrong done to Dick; but she checked herself, and only said, "His mother was always quarrelling with him and hated him, and he detested being in my father's office. He wanted to be an architect; so when things became unbearable he went away, and nobody seemed to care, so I never knew where he was till I saw him yesterday."

"There are a great many steps between a mason and an architect," said Ellis; "I suppose he has no money?"

"I do not think he has a penny. I think his father was an artist and rather a bad man," returned Marjory, and she resumed her work, while Ellis thought to himself, "Old Acland has probably fallen victim to an adventuress. His sweet little daughter has a bad look out. It would be a meritorious act to take her out of the stepmother's clutches and put her in some pretty pleasant nest, well sheltered from observation as well as from winter and cold weather, but she is a very wild bird."

Here Mr. Carteret came in to inspect Marjory's progress, and to find various minute faults, so the conversation ended.

Ellis finished his letters very soon, and went noiselessly away.

The next day, however, brought Marjory two letters—one from George announcing his advent on the following Saturday, only to stay till Monday, and concluding hastily, "I can tell you all about everything when we meet."

The second was from Dick.

"I am longing for a talk with you," he said, "but I am afraid it will be difficult to manage, for I do not like to call at the Priory. I have reconnoitred the country, and find that midway between the village and the Priory, on the path through woods and over the hill, some trees have been felled and are lying about. If you can walk so far on Sunday afternoon, I could meet you. I have much to tell, and some good news. Let me know if you can manage this. Address me at the Post Office, Langford—I lodge close by. Do not put 'Esquire' on your letter!—Yours affectionately, Dick Cranston."

"I will go and look at the place to-day if I can," was Marjory's mental resolve as she read these letters, with a beaming face, which fully informed Ellis, who sat opposite her at breakfast, who were the writers and what the contents.

"George says he can come on Saturday and stay till Monday afternoon, since you are so very kind as to invite him," she exclaimed, addressing Mr. and Mrs. Carteret, "and you have made me very happy, I cannot thank you enough."

Mrs. Carteret smiled good-naturedly, and her husband remarked that he supposed the catalogue would stand still for two days at least.

"And afterwards," said Marjory, "I will work harder than ever to make up for lost time."

"There will not be much time lost," observed Ellis from behind his newspaper. "Saturday is always a half holiday, and of course you do not expect Miss Acland to break the Sabbath, sir."

"To think that I shall see George the day after to-morrow!" murmured Marjory, as if to herself. "I can hardly believe it!"

For the rest of the meal she was evidently preoccupied and answered at random, while her heightened colour and sparkling eyes showed the joyous excitement of her heart.

The time which intervened before the arrival of George was not however without uneasy considerations.

The young sailor was to start at cockcrow by a cheap train arriving at Market Gilston about noon, and Marjory was puzzled as to how he was to accomplish the five or six miles which lay between the station and the Priory.

She knew—or guessed—that he would scarcely have spare cash enough to pay for a private conveyance, and there was no public one to be had. He might walk, of course, but that would seem very miserable to the servants and every one. Then she had only a few shillings herself. Neither Uncle nor Aunt Carteret seemed to think it necessary to send a carriage for him, at least they said nothing about it, and she could *not* screw up courage to ask. She dreaded irritating Uncle Carteret, and so risking a cold reception for her brother, whose brief visit she wished to make as bright and agreeable as possible.

After cogitating on this difficult question, Marjory reluctantly decided on availing herself of the offer Ellis had made to help her in any way he could, and applying to him for assistance.

It was something of an effort to speak to him, but for George's sake she would venture.

She found the opportunity that evening, when Mrs. Carteret and Virginie were absorbed in a box from Paris.

The perfume of delicate tobacco guided her to the ruins, where she found Ellis seated on a broken column.

"Excuse me for interrupting you," began Marjory shyly.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Ellis, as if he had expected her.

"I have come to ask your help," resumed Marjory, gathering some wild roses and plucking them to pieces as she spoke.

"It is yours."

"You know George is coming to-morrow?"

"Yes! I rejoiced in your pleasure yesterday, to-day a change has come o'er the spirit of your dream. You are worrying about something."

"I am; but how can you tell?"

"I should be a very stupid fellow, very unfit for a diplomat, if I could not read *your* face."

"I do not like the idea of your—of any one knowing my thoughts."

"I daresay not; but how can I be useful to you?"

"You see Gilston is more than five miles away, and—and—Uncle Carteret has not offered to send for George."

"I see; and you want to go and meet him?"

"Yes, I should like to do so very much."

"Leave it to me," said Ellis; "when is he due?"

"At 12.20."

"That might suit me very well. I think of going to town for a few days."

"Oh, don't go!" cried Marjory impulsively; "I should be so sorry if you were away while George is here."

"Indeed!" looking down into her eyes, "I feel flattered."

"It is a selfish wish on my part," she returned with a half smile, and meeting his glance frankly, "but Mr. Carteret would be kinder to George, if you were here to keep him in order!"

Ellis laughed. "I wish I had the influence with which you credit me."

"Still he is never so cross when you are here," said Marjory.

"He is rather a cantankerous subject," returned Ellis. "You will be very glad to get away."

"Indeed I shall not. I prefer being here to being at home, and Aunt Carteret is very kind."

"She is a remarkably well-bred woman," returned Ellis gravely. "Well, Miss Acland, you may consider this matter settled, and be ready to start at half-past eleven to-morrow."

"Thank you very much, I am really grateful." She half offered him her hand and then drew it back with sweet girlish shyness.

"Why balk your own gracious impulse?" exclaimed Ellis quickly, as he caught and kept it for a moment. "Let this be a token of plenary absolution from the penalties I may unconsciously have incurred. Will you accept me as your friend and colleague in future?"

"Thank you very much," repeated Marjory, uneasy, she knew not why. "You are really very good, but I—I don't think we are exactly suited to be friends. Now I must go, Mrs. Carteret may want me."

"Don't!" emphatically. "Not yet. Who was with her when you came out?"

"Virginie."

"Then she is not ready for you yet by a long way. Tell me more about this brother of yours, and the young mason. He really looked too good for such work."

Marjory hesitated. She wished to go, she wished to stay. It was delightful to talk about the two boys she loved so well, and

Ellis contrived to put so much sympathy into his voice, though he said little, that Marjory was insensibly drawn into talking more of home and its circumstances than she quite approved on reflection.

"Perhaps if I were to ask Beaulieu to speak to the clerk of the works he might give young Cranston a lift," said Ellis thoughtfully.

"That would be a great help," cried Marjory. "I will tell Dick; he will know how you can help him."

"When are you going to see him?" sharply.

"On Sunday. I shall take George with me to meet him on the path to the village. I can hardly believe that we three shall be all together again. I *am* so much obliged to you, Mr. Ellis;" she turned as she spoke and walked quickly towards the house, pausing at the entrance of the ruins to wave her hand and give him a backward glance.

The day so eagerly anticipated by Marjory rose fair and smiling. It was the end of July and the weather was indescribably charming. Breakfast-time came and no word was spoken as yet about sending for George. Marjory could not eat; she shot one or two appealing glances at Ellis, who made no sign. At last, when the meal was nearly over, he said, addressing Mrs. Carteret, "As I am going to drive over to Gilston, Miss Acland might like to come and meet her brother, perhaps."

"But Marjory might get on with the catalogue this morning while waiting for—" began Mr. Carteret.

"I should not advise you to trust her in her present excited mood," interrupted Ellis smiling. "Depend upon it, she would have to tear up to-morrow what she wrote to-day."

"Very likely, very likely indeed!" cried Mr. Carteret peevishly.

"I can work till—till Mr. Ellis is ready to start," put in Marjory. "And I will be very careful—I do want very much to go and meet George."

"Oh! I know what your carefulness is, young lady," returned Mr. Carteret.

Marjory was tremulous with joy and anticipation when she was informed that Mr. Ellis was ready and waiting for her.

She ran downstairs, her gloves not yet buttoned, looking more than pretty in a fresh morning frock and a shady hat turned up at one side, a tea-rose with its dark green leaves fastened under the brim. Ellis was already seated in the dog-cart and stretched out his hand to assist her ascent.

As soon as they were clear away, Marjory exclaimed: "It was such a relief this morning when you spoke of driving over to Gilston and taking me; I grew dreadfully nervous till you did speak."

"I think you might have trusted me," looking into her eyes

with an expression that created an indefinite sense of embarrassment, which she told herself was too stupid.

"Yes, I think I ought," she returned softly, and fell into silence. The great pleasure of meeting her brother, now it was so near, grew shadowy with the fear of seeing him sorely changed by the roughness of his life since they last met, with the anticipation of parting again so soon. Then the keen sense of wrong done him by sending him from home in so inferior a position woke up again, and deepened her gravity.

"Do you not think you have tormented yourself enough?" Ellis asked at length.

"How do you mean?" exclaimed Marjory with startled eyes.

He laughed. "You are very much afraid of my reading your thoughts! I can see, however, that your meditations have not been pleasant."

"Well, no! I am afraid George will be a good deal changed, after living among sailors and people like that, and," with a sigh, "he was so nice."

"Do not trouble about it. A few minutes will answer the conjecture. Besides, it takes a great deal to change nature."

There was a pause.

"Do you think we are really related, as you said we were?" asked Marjory abruptly.

"Yes, certainly. I am old Carteret's third cousin, or some such thing, and you are his grand-niece. Of course we are cousins."

"And so is George?"

"No doubt."

A little further talk about Marjory's disappointment at his not being in the Navy brought them to the town.

"Suppose I leave you at the station," said Ellis, "and go about my business, which is only a visit to the saddler's, then you can have a few minutes with your brother before I return to pick you up."

"Oh, thank you! thank you! you think of everything. Then you are not going to London?"

"No," smiling, "not till next week."

Here Ellis turned sharp into the yard of the station and drew up. Beckoning a porter to hold the horse, he sprang down and assisted Marjory to alight, accompanying her into the ticket office to inquire, with the quiet ineffable air of authority which always impressed people, if the 12.20 train from London was generally punctual.

"No, sir, that she bain't," was the emphatic reply.

"Then is it worth while waiting now?" he asked Marjory.

"Oh, yes, I should like him to find me here."

It seemed hours to Marjory while she paced the platform or sought shelter from the sun in a dingy unswept waiting-room.

At length, quite ten minutes behind time, the ardently-expected train came in.

Marjory eagerly scanned the passengers as they alighted, and after a moment's uncertainty recognized a young man—taller and thinner than the George she remembered—dressed in a light-coloured check suit, with a rough blue coat over his arm and a small bag in his hand. The next moment her arms were round his neck.

"Oh, George! I thought you would never come."

"Why, Marjory, I didn't know you! You have grown quite an elegant young lady."

Then a few hurried questions and answers, and Marjory led him into the station yard. Ellis had not yet returned.

"We must wait a few minutes for the dog-cart. You have no more luggage?"

"Luggage! no. I had hard work to get a decent coat to come in, I can tell you. My father is stingier than ever."

"No, no! *He* is not to blame. But how thin you are, and how brown, and *how* you smell of tobacco!"

"I am sorry, Marge; but you see I was shut up with three fellows who were blowing clouds all the way down, so I was obliged to smoke too."

"You look ever so much older. Have you been miserable, dear?" pressing his arm fondly.

"Oh no, by no means, and I have got through the worst of it now. But if I had known exactly what I was going into, I don't think I should have been so ready to give up the Royal Navy."

"Ah! George, I am sure you have suffered fearfully."

"Nonsense, Marge, nothing of the sort; at any rate I am going to be very jolly here for the next few days. What sort of an old buffer is the uncle? I say, is this the trap?" as Ellis drove up.

"Yes, come along; we must not be late for luncheon."

"Well, you have him safe and sound," said Ellis good-humouredly. "Glad to see you; jump up behind." He stretched out his hand to Marjory, who was pleased at his unwonted cordiality, and they set off at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEY THREE MEET AGAIN.

THAT afternoon and evening were ever graven on the tablets of Marjory's memory as curiously interwoven with pleasure and annoyance.

To stroll about the beautiful ruins and the picturesque grounds with George was delightful; to sit at table with him and Uncle Carteret was a sore trial.

George, in the first place, brought no dress-clothes—for the best

reason in the world, he had none to bring. Then he did not know the uses of many of the more luxurious implements of the table. As to the French dishes, knowledge was of small importance, as he ate indiscriminately of them all. He was in no way vulgar, Marjory told herself, but he was unconventional, and extremely shy, which, of course, encouraged Uncle Carteret to snub him.

Here Ellis did yeoman's service. He turned Uncle Carteret's stings aside with diplomatic dexterity, and covered George's occasional slips with the ægis of tact. Then he assumed an air of deep interest respecting colonial trade and the condition of the merchant service, on which topics the young sailor spoke intelligently enough.

But his hands! Poor Marjory could not keep her eyes away from them. They were rough and scarred and brown, and one or two nails were crushed and injured. He was still good-looking, even gentleman-like looking; but between him and Ellis what an immense gulf was fixed! The contrast irritated Marjory even while feeling warmly grateful to Ellis for his loyal help.

It was a relief to rise from table and escape both Uncle and Aunt Carteret's observing eyes; for even the latter, though polite and kind, evidently looked on their young guest as a kind of curiosity quite apart from her life. Marjory's heart went out to her brother all the more glowingly for these impalpable slights. He was—like herself—the victim of a destiny brought on them by her father's wife. If she could make it up to him in any way, she would have gone and lived with him in a hovel in a wilderness, where no one should mock at or undervalue him! her dear, kind, light-hearted brother.

Her feeling for him was tenderer and more compassionate than for Dick, warmly as she felt for him. He was so strong and resolute, he would conquer fortune if any man could. But George was different. Ellis noticed from time to time that her eyes filled, her colour changed, and then, with a brave effort, she would conquer herself and address her uncle, to distract his attention, or engage Mrs. Carteret on some subject that turned her thoughts from George's shortcomings.

It was an unfamiliar and a somewhat wearisome world to the ambitious *attaché*; but, so far, Marjory was an interesting study. She helped him through the dull time which he had devoted to the difficult and delicate task of persuading his old kinsman to make certain dispositions of his property which would be to the advantage of his heir-presumptive. He brought to his task some admirable qualities—patience, tenacity of purpose, an equable temper, a keen regard for his own interest. So he stayed, amiably, to talk with Mr. Carteret and further his special object, while George and Marjory—having asked and obtained leave to go and look at the sunset—set forth for a walk together.

With what delight they scampered off to the ruins, anxious to get well out of sight; and then they paused and found a seat where they could rest and pour out unchecked the experiences of what seemed to them the ages which had passed since last they met. George was more anxious to hear Marjory's history than to enlarge upon his own. He was ready enough to describe any pleasant adventures, any bright bits in his generally monotonous existence; but he did not care to talk about the trials and troubles of his first days on board a merchantman—though no doubt the life was luxurious, compared to that of his predecessors of twenty or thirty years before.

Then Marjory had the history of Dick's troubles to recount. The particulars had never reached George. Marjory could not bear to put on paper the accusation she felt to be so unmerited. George, therefore, had but an indistinct idea of the occurrence, which Marjory now described, even to the minutest details, and with a graphic power which astonished George, who was deeply indignant at the cruel treatment of his chum.

"I never could make out why he did not write to me," said George, when Marjory had finished her dramatic narration, "and now I begin to believe that Mrs. Acland *is* a bad lot."

"You begin to see through her at last," cried Marjory. "I used to think, sometimes, I was too bitter against her—that I was fanciful and unjust; but she gets worse and worse, or I get to know her better. I believe she hates Dick more than she does you or me. No! not worse than she hates *me*. I feel she cannot bear the sight of me. I suppose that is the reason I dislike her, really."

"Yes, no doubt. And you know, Marge, you can be horrid disagreeable."

"Say horridly, George. I daresay I can; but I fancy I am better-tempered now. I feel oftener sad than cross, and I am more sorry for people. I certainly feel that I should like to shake Uncle Carteret sometimes; *he* can be disagreeable! Still, I am grateful to him, and I could be quite happy with Aunt Carteret. I am not sure that she cares a straw about me, but she is always just, and so even in temper, I envy her. She is generous too. She gives me quantities of pretty things, and made Uncle Carteret buy all the nice clothes I have, instead of paying me for my services. I was never fit to be seen before."

"Well, you are quite fit to be seen now," said George, looking admiringly at his sister. "You have turned out quite a pretty girl, Marge; and you have a deuced nice figure."

"Have I? Do you really think so?" cried Marjory, delighted. "I used to be so afraid I should grow up ugly! If I am just pleasant-looking, I shall be content. Beauty is entrancing! I could look at a beautiful man or woman for ever! See,

George, my hands are not so red as they used to be," and she spread them out.

George nodded, and busied himself filling his pipe.

"Perhaps, Georgie dear, you think me nice because you have not seen me for a long time."

"May be so," said George philosophically, and began to puff.

"What nasty tobacco!" was Marjory's next remark. "Mr. Ellis has cigarettes that smell deliciously."

"I daresay he has; and he pays a delicious price for them. I am glad to get what I can; besides, I am used to it. The stronger the better, when you have the watch on a cold stormy night."

"I can imagine it," said Marjory tenderly, slipping her arm through his and hugging it.

"I suppose this Ellis is a regular high and mighty chap?" asked George condescendingly, permitting his sister's caress.

"I believe so. He is, or has been, *attaché* at Vienna; and Aunt Carteret says he will be an ambassador one day."

"No! Well, he has good manners, anyhow. He was helping me out of holes all dinner-time; and that old buffer Carteret was always thrusting me into them. Ellis is a good-natured fellow!"

"I am not so sure," said Marjory slowly, with a profound air. "I believe he could be cruel if he liked. I hated him when he came first. He oppressed me in an odd sort of way. Now I don't know whether I like him or not, though he has really been very good to me; but I think I am a little afraid of him. He gives me the idea of masked power."

"Oh, that's nonsense! He might have fallen in love with you, only he is rather old."

"In love with *me*!" and Marjory laughed, a light-hearted, natural, girlish laugh. "That is too funny an idea. What do you know about love, you silly boy?"

"A good deal," said George with much gravity, taking his pipe from his mouth. "I was awfully in love with a girl on the voyage out; she was such a lovely little creature, and I think—I think she noticed me, for she used to ask me to do things for her, and smile."

"Do you mean to say you never spoke to her?" asked Marjory.

"Well, she spoke to me once or twice; but you must remember it would be the height of presumption for an apprentice on board ship to talk to a lady passenger."

"I suppose so," said Marjory with a sigh, and she did not speak again for some minutes.

Then George began to talk confidentially of his hopes and plans. He was determined to stick to the calling he had adopted, though the life was very different from what he had expected. "It would not be a bad thing to command a steamer,

and I am getting on pretty well ; you see one must train in a sailing ship, but all the high-class merchant vessels are steamers now," &c., &c.

The soft darkness of a summer's night began to close round them before Marjory remembered it was time to return to the house. "Uncle Carteret will make a fuss, George ; we had better go in."

* * * * *

It is to be feared that Marjory did not give that undivided attention to the rector's sermon next day which it no doubt deserved.

She was watching the sky through an open window near the Priory pew, and hoping the fleecy grey clouds were not gathering for rain. If so, she would not be able to meet Dick as appointed, that is, if it rained heavily.

The gentlemen of the family were conspicuous by their absence. Old Mr. Carteret was an avowed freethinker, and disposed to flaunt his freedom of thought somewhat obtrusively, and Ellis saw no object to be gained by boring himself on Sunday mornings.

Mrs. Carteret therefore kept up the character of the establishment, and with her, of course, came Marjory and George.

Luncheon seemed preternaturally long that day. Uncle Carteret would talk and dawdle, while Marjory was dying to meet Dick and hear his history since they parted.

At last they rose from table, and Marjory murmured something to Mrs. Carteret, something about a walk and meeting her half-brother.

"You had better take umbrellas," said Mrs. Carteret, "the sky looks threatening."

"Yes," cried Mr. Carteret, who overheard, "do not be imprudent and take cold. Colds are the beginning of all kinds of disorders, and I am exceedingly afraid of infection in my frail health."

"I *will* take care, uncle," said Marjory, as she made her escape.

It was a soft grey day, the atmosphere a little oppressive, but trees, grass, flowers, shrubs, all gave out their fullest fragrance. The two young people walked somewhat silently along, ascended the hill behind the Priory and pursued the path which led by the wood to the village of Langford. Marjory's heart was very full at the idea of hearing Dick's story and of telling him her own. What hardships he must have undergone, but at least he looked well and cheerful. He would not fail to meet them? Even while the veiled doubt floated through her mind, a tall figure came round a bend of the path. George, with a shout that woke the echoes, sprang forward and clasped Dick's hand as the latter paused, his blue eyes beaming with pleasure, and a joyous smile showing his fine white teeth under his thick golden mous

tache. Marjory observed that he had not lost the look and bearing of a gentleman, that his morning suit of brown tweed was well cut and became him, that, in short, he had deteriorated less than George.

"Oh, Marjory, I thought you would not fail, but I little thought who would be with you. Why, where did you drop from, old chap?" While he spoke he held Marjory's hand, and stooping, kissed her cheek. Her first impulse was to throw her arms round him, but something in his movement checked her.

"Well, Dick, you look first-rate! You seem to have been getting on."

"Come back with me to where the trees lie," returned Dick; "we can sit down and have a regular good talk, we have no end to tell each other. I was here ever so much too soon, but I knew what a long affair Sunday dinner is, so I waited patiently. Why, Marjory, you have grown a grand young lady. I never was so amazed as when you flew over to me at Beaulieu."

"And I never was so delighted, except to see George."

"Come, Marge, you sit between us," said Dick, when they reached the resting-place he had chosen, and Marge quickly complied. First, young Cranston questioned them eagerly respecting home and their own adventures before he would speak of himself, listening with profoundest interest to all they had to tell.

"And has no suspicion ever arisen as to who was the real thief, as to who took the money I was charged with stealing," asked Dick at last with a frown.

"Not that I ever heard," returned Marjory; "in fact, it was never mentioned. Have you any idea?"

"Perhaps I have, but I don't want to talk about it," he said, a distressed look clouding his face. "It was a cruel business altogether. I shan't soon forget how I felt when I left you that day. How long ago is it, Marjory?"

"Nearly fifteen months."

"Well, it seems more than fifteen years. You were a trump to me, Marge," and he suddenly put his arm round her and hugged her against his side. "She gave me the money you sent her, George, nearly every penny she had. You don't know what a help it was to me, Marge," continued Dick, removing his arm; "I do not know how I should have got on without it, and I have saved as best I could to return it to you. I never intended to write to you or try to see you till I could return it. Here it is, Marge." He drew out a shabby purse and extracted some coins folded in paper, which he put in her hand, closing it forcibly on the little packet.

"No, no, Dick! I don't want it."

"Nor do I. Give me something to keep instead, just for a keepsake. No, Marge, there is no use in refusing; I will not take them back."

"Now get on like a good chap and tell us all about everything," cried George impatiently.

"Here goes then. You remember just before you sailed for Australia, George, I fell in with a man I had known when I was a little fellow away in the country—a man called Roper, a mason. He told me where he lived, and I walked over one Sunday to see him. He made a good deal of me, because I once waded into a stream and pulled out a baby girl he was very fond of. When my mother," he paused an instant, "when my mother tried to shove that theft upon me, and I felt I could never live under the same roof with her again, I went straight away to Roper. Of course I only told him that I had quarrelled with my people and couldn't stand the office; it would have been ruin to me if the true story had got out. Well, Roper was very kind. He got me a room close by them, I won't say much about it, it was by no means a dainty chamber; however, the rent was low. Then there was a difficulty about getting me work. You see masons, bricklayers, handicraftsmen of that kind, are hampered with rules about apprentices and unions and lots of things, so Roper could only give me labourer's work at first. I did not care so long as I could earn my bread. Soon, however, Roper—who was a master mason—was employed by a firm of builders on a large factory they were putting up at Lambeth, and then I got my chance. Roper was an uneducated man, and I was able to help him with measurements and accounts; then there were some crooked bits of masonry, and I made him a copy of the plans for his own private use. The clerk of the works noticed this, and often had me in to his office to help him, and I learned a good deal in that way. Unfortunately poor old Roper, though a good, well-meaning fellow, got a drinking fit every now and then. He spent a lot of money at these times, and his wife used to be in a dreadful state of mind. I helped him over some of these turns, and I think he grew ashamed of my seeing him. We were 'out' for a short time last winter, which made things a little hard, but we were better off than many others."

"Was it not trying, having no one of your own class to speak to?" asked Marjory, whose eager eyes seemed to drink in Dick's words.

"It was curious; but perhaps the worst thing of all was the want of books. It is no wonder that intelligent artisans devour newspapers and swallow all they assert. Some of them are shrewd enough, but for want of training and association their shrewdness runs wild. If I had not been among these men, I should never have known how much is learned from living with reasonable educated people. Book knowledge is only one means of information. I got on pretty well with the men. They were suspicious of me, because I was a little different from themselves, but I kept very quiet, and after a fight or two with one of the worst, and proving I

could hold my own, I did better, and I must say they are all ready to help one another when in trouble, with real generosity. When I could not get work I used to draw and copy plans, and design decorations and keep as busy as I could. In the spring, Roper had a lot of repairing and putting in new shop fronts to do and some odd work in gentlemen's houses, and he always wanted me, paying me fairly. At last, in the end of May, he was sent for by Carson and Humphries the builders, and engaged to do certain parts of the restorations down here at Beaulieu. It was quite delightful to get away to the sweet fresh country. Most of our men have their quarters at Gilston—which is nearer—but I have found a clean little place in the village down there."

"How long have you been here?" asked George.

"Nearly two months." Dick then went on to say that the same clerk of the works who had noticed him previously was employed at Beaulieu, and again took him to assist in his office, while he found opportunities for making himself useful to the architect as well. "Now," he recommenced after a short pause, "for the bit of good news I promised you. About a fortnight ago, I heard the architect and the clerk of the works in the office talking of a new man Lord Beaulieu had brought over from France to decorate the reception rooms in the modern part of the Castle. Mr. Jervis, the architect, said he believed he was an American, and a clever artist, and the clerk had just begun to say he was a foreigner, when they both stopped short, for a gentleman in a velvet jacket, and very well got up altogether, walked in. You may guess how surprised I was when I saw he was the Mr. Brand who called, as I daresay you may remember, on the children's birthday, just before I came away last year."

"Is it possible! How extraordinary!" cried Marjory.

"He glanced at me, but took no further notice till he finished talking with the architect; then he came over and looked at what I was drawing. 'That's not bad,' he said; 'are you Mr. Revel's assistant?'"

"'Sometimes, not regularly,' I answered. He was silent for a minute, then he said, 'You might assist me too, when Revel can spare you; come and see me this evening, I am staying at the White Horse at Gilston.'"

"And you went?" asked George.

"I did, though I did not half like it; I was afraid he might put my mother on the scent. I found I had nothing to fear however. I can't tell you how kind and pleasant he was. He had recognized me at once, but did not say so till he heard my story. He questioned me pretty close, and seemed puzzled. Then we talked, and somehow I was greatly taken with him. He knows a lot about art, and he seems to have been a fast friend of my father's. He did not say much about Mrs. Acland, but I don't fancy he likes her. At last he said that for my father's sake he

would help me. Then he gave me some designs he had sketched, and told me how to elaborate them. I was to work them up, and take them to him when I considered them fit for inspection. The upshot was that he left the inn at Gilston, and has taken lodgings in the village near mine, and now he has spoken to Lord Beaulieu, and I am to be his assistant regularly. He calls it his apprenticeship, only I have bargained for two evenings a week to help Roper. This was settled the very day you saw me among the workmen. You see you brought me luck, Marge."

"I hope I did. What sort of a man is this Mr. Brand?"

"First, before everything else, he is a gentleman! It is wonderful to hear him talk sometimes; then again, he is terribly depressed. I rather fancy he used to take opium, and he is trying to do without it. Anyway he is a wonderful draughtsman. He does not seem to like being alone, and has me in nearly every evening to draw, and to talk with him. I believe he met Lord Beaulieu long ago in America, and then again last spring at some place he has near the Pyrenees; but Brand is a thorough Englishman, I am certain. Yesterday morning, I began to work on the decorations of the dining-room, with Brand. It will be splendid! In short, I feel I have my foot on the ladder, and it will go hard if I don't creep up a tolerable height. Ah! if I had only been trained early, I should have no fear, as it is I shall get on slower."

"Well, you have been in luck," cried George; "then you are a clever chap, and that counts for a good deal."

"I can only work in a particular line; I should have been nowhere as a lawyer."

"It is quite like a novel," said Marjory, gazing dreamily away over the fields and swelling upland that lay spread before them. "Suppose this Mr. Brand turns out to be a nobleman, or a millionaire in disguise, and gives you a fortune?"

Dick laughed (how pleasant his laugh was). "I do not think Brand has ever been troubled with much money," he said, "but he may help me to make a tolerably good position. I am sure he has a history, a painful history."

"I should like to see him again. I remember his face," exclaimed Marjory. "He looks ill and thin, does he not? and he has a sweet voice?"

Dick nodded. After some discussion and conjectures respecting the story to which they had listened, Dick asked Marjory if she were likely to remain with her grand-uncle.

She shook her head. "I fear not! I gather from what they say, that Mr. Ellis is persuading Mr. Carteret to sell the Priory; and at any rate, my uncle will not stay later than October. Neither he nor my aunt have ever said a word about taking me abroad with them. I don't think they care enough for any one to put themselves out of the way, so I am almost sure I shall have to go home. How I hate the idea! You will write to me, will you not, Dick?"

You will let me know where you are and what you are doing; I can always get your letters without Mrs. Acland seeing."

"Of course I will write to you, Marge, but you need not hide my letters; you have a right to have them, and now I have regular work I do not fear my mother meddling with me."

Then they rose and walked to the beginning of the village, where Dick turned and went back with George and Marjory. Time flew fast and the dinner-hour drew near; still they were far from having exhausted all they had to say.

"I am so glad, Dick, that you have been able to get some nice clothes," said Marjory, as they paused near the Priory to say a final adieu.

"Don't you recognize these garments?" asked Dick, holding out his arm for her inspection. "They were new just before I left Falkland Terrace. I was almost ashamed of taking them with me, but I had worked pretty well at the office for a year, and I was to have had some pay at Easter, which I did not get, so I carried them off. It was not your father's fault, Marge; he is naturally kind and generous."

"Not to me!" cried George. "He never gives me a rap."

"I will walk towards the village next Sunday. Will you come and meet me?" asked Marjory.

"Yes, without fail, rain or shine."

"Oh, if it is wet, it would be no use. I dare not go out."

At last they said good-bye, and parted.

The evening was something dreful in its leaden dulness. George found a book, and Marjory was upheld by the memory of Dick's delightful story. Before bed-time the brother and sister contrived a *tête-à-tête* ramble through the grounds, in the course of which Marjory insisted on sharing her newly-recovered store with him.

Next day, her brief pleasure was over. After a broken morning, the young sailor, with wet eyes which he tried hard to conceal, bid farewell to his weeping sister, who accompanied him on foot half way to Gilston, and returned in a state of the deepest depression, much increased by the absence of Ellis, who had started early for London, which looked to Marjory very much as if he had really postponed his visit to please her.

CHAPTER XV.

A BREATHING SPACE.

THE cottage in which Brand had taken up his abode stood at the entrance of the village and was of a better class than the rest. It belonged to the bailiff of the Langford estate, who was well pleased to let a couple of rooms to a liberal tenant, while his neat,

active wife exerted her simple culinary skill to the utmost to tempt the variable and indifferent appetite of the strange gentleman who spoke "so civil like."

The sun had set but it was still light, on the Sabbath succeeding the one when Marjory had enjoyed the interview with her two brothers.

Brand had been sitting in the garden reading and smoking and had now retired from the dews of evening to his parlour.

He had had a sleepless night and a weary day from neuralgic pains, and was beginning to feel his own company rather tiresome, when an approaching step caught his ear. He laid down his book, and listened with an expectant expression. In another minute a tap on the door elicited "Come in," from the listener, and Dick Cranston entered with a roll of paper under his arm.

"Ah! there you are. I thought you did not mean to come. I have had an awful time of it."

"I am very sorry," with a sympathetic inquiring look. "You see I was working all the morning at that plan you suggested for the addition near the west tower—I have brought it with me—and then I went to meet Marjory Acland, my sister, you know."

"Your sister, eh?" languidly. "Let me see what you have made of the plan. Pull back the curtains and put the table in the window."

For some time they discussed the drawing earnestly, Brand pointing out errors, while evidently pleased with the work.

"You've the making of an architect in you," said he, after looking silently at the plan for a moment or two, "but of course you have a great deal to learn. How old do you say you are?"

"I was twenty my last birthday."

"You were twenty-one!" said Brand sharply. "I remember drinking your health the day you were born."

"Did you know my father so long ago?" asked Dick.

"I knew him before that, my boy. I knew him in all his troubles, a good many of which were his own fault, but I need not talk of them to his son; and he had a heart withal."

"He must have had some good points, or *you* would not have stuck to him as you did," said Dick sadly. "It seems rather hard that death should have taken my father, and some intolerable quality or other in myself, I suppose, disgusted my mother; at any rate, I am pretty well alone."

"Never mind, you are all the freer to work your way up. I don't think you have much to lament. Just fight for your own hand in the battle of life. I never could understand the art of getting on. My own movements, after reaching a certain point, have been retrograde. It is curious how some fellows—fellows that seem to know life well too, and can work, fail for want of that indescribable something which enables them to grasp fortune when the jade shows symptoms of fickleness! There's a flaw

somewhere in them—sometimes it's generosity, or a weak reluctance to press before another, or an instant's self-distrust—a want of the hard self-reliance that insists on having a try anyhow, hit or miss, and don't care a hang if people sneer about presumption. I wonder what will become of you, Dick? I am half afraid you are not hard enough to succeed."

Dick smiled. "I am not wildly ambitious," he said, "but somehow I do not fear the future. I think I can work and wait. I may never rise high, but I think I can win independence, and there is great pleasure in a simple life."

"May you always think so!" ejaculated Brand. "I believe you are made of stronger stuff than your father. He had plunged deep into difficulties and succumbed to a lot of temptations by the time he was twenty-one. Well, I shall do all I can to help you, but I don't think there is a great deal of time before me. I feel awfully weak to day. Tell me, how does your mother get on with her step-children?"

"With George well enough, but with Marjory—no! she was always irreconcilable. There seems to be an antagonism between them. Marjory was awfully bitter against me, too, when I first went to live with them; she could not speak a civil word to me. I suppose it was natural for her to object to an intruder, but it made things hard to bear."

"She must be a cantankerous young lady."

Dick shook his head. "She is, or was, quick-tempered, but there is not a truer-hearted girl in England," he said warmly. "Then she speaks so honestly! Whatever she says is what she really believes at the time. Hard as she was to me, I was sorry when she went to school, though George and I were better friends when she went away."

"She has a nice head," said Brand musingly, "and a speaking face—as well as I remember."

"It was shameful," resumed Dick, "the length of time she was left at school and the way she was kept there, as far as I can make out as a pupil teacher. I always felt angry with Mr. Acland for that, depriving her and George of everything."

"Ah!" said Brand. "Well, she came round to you?"

"Yes; she behaved like a trump to me when I left my step-father's house. I think she likes me nearly as well as George. If I could ever make a home for her I *should* be glad, for she will never stay in her father's house. I am sometimes half afraid of the future for her—she is hasty and impetuous, and might do something rash."

"Won't old Carteret keep her?"

"She does not think so."

"Bring me the tobacco-jar, my pipe is empty. Take my advice, Dick, don't go to meet her for a couple of Sundays. It has a queer look, a young lady like Miss Acland rambling through

the country with a workman—for that is all you seem at present—and people are ready to talk ill-naturedly, especially country people."

Dick coloured quickly. "But if they know we are brother and sister?" he exclaimed.

"Ay! but they don't know; and indeed you are no relations whatever."

"No? Not even half-brother and sister?"

"No, stupid boy, of course not! Her father's younger children are her half-brother and sister."

Dick was silent and thoughtful for a minute. "Then you really think I ought not to take a walk with her every Sunday?"

"I certainly think you had better not."

"It was something to look forward to all the week," said Dick regretfully.

"Very likely."

"And she will be disappointed, too."

"No doubt."

"I must write her a line to say I shall not be able to meet her."

"Do so," returned Brand, "and as I have not been spending any money lately I shall hire a trap and we will drive over to D—, it is not more than seventeen miles, and see the cathedral, it is a poem in stone."

"Thank you," said Dick soberly. "I wish Marjory could come with us."

"I am sure I should have no objection," returned Brand, "but fate forbids such things to be."

There was silence while he filled his pipe.

"Stay and have some supper with me," resumed Brand; "I don't care to be alone, and I don't suppose you have anything better to do."

"I never have anything half so pleasant to do," said Dick warmly.

"Not even walking with your—sister?"

"It is a different kind of pleasure, though a great pleasure; but it is like getting into another world to talk with you."

"God help you, boy!" smiling, yet heaving a deep sigh, "you had better keep out of my world. Here is supper, and thank heaven I feel inclined for it."

The landlady, with an occasional word of inquiry, or a remark on the weather and the crops, set forth the table with cold chicken, home-made bread, and a tongue of her own curing. Brand produced a bottle of claret from the cupboard, and invited his young friend to fall to.

Presently the lamp was lit and Dick's host brightened up as his custom was at night. How well he talked! He had read and even much; he had whimsical theories on many subjects, not rigid

convictions, but light airy fancies, which could be floated hither and thither as the Japanese performers waft paper butterflies by the motion of their fans. Then art was a prolific topic, on which Dick was never wearied of hearing him enlarge, and through all there sounded an undertone of kindest interest in Dick himself, in all that he remembered, all he hoped or feared, or longed to attempt, which drew the young man to him irresistibly. "You do not drink wine," he said at last; "would you like some beer, or have you adopted the 'Blue Ribbon?'"

"No, I have taken no pledge, but as water costs nothing, I stick to it, and find I want no more."

"I daresay you are right; yet there is a certain, I was going to say intellectual, loss in not being able to appreciate a glass of good wine, but that is rather too strong. I always liked it myself, though I never drank hard. Nor did your father, and he was driven sometimes to seek oblivion at any price. His greatest temptation was opium."

"At all events he was cut off from temptation tolerably early," said Dick with feeling. "I often fancy I should have been fond of him, if he had come back. My mother never encouraged me to lavish my affection on her. Now, when I hear your voice it brings a sort of hazy recollection with it—a dim remembrance of climbing on a man's knee and rubbing my cheek against a soft beard."

"Do you remember that?" murmured Brand in a low tone, setting down the glass he was lifting to his lips. "Ah, yes, I was constantly with your father in those days."

Both were silent for a while, then Brand, rousing himself with an effort, said, "Those rooms will be ready for occupation the end of the week. I hope the fair widow will approve."

"She is Lord Beaulieu's sister?" asked Dick.

"Yes, young Maynard was a great catch, and the Honourable Miss Saville had no money. Her elder sister is married to the rector of a country parish. I believe Mrs. Maynard is a beauty."

"You seem to know a great deal about people as well as things," said Dick, looking at him admiringly.

"Ah, well, your father used to tell me a great deal about the upper ten in old days, and since I returned from America I have had occasion to make some inquiries about the Beaulieu family."

"But you are not American?"

"Oh, I scarcely know what I am; cosmopolite before everything. Look here, Dick, I have one or two plans in my head; for you, I mean. There is Jervis the architect. I want to get you into his office for a while, only I am afraid he will ask a premium, and I don't care for your going through a regular apprenticeship. He has a great name, and you could pick up a

good deal from him; still if he lets you in for nothing, I do not see how you are to live without pay. I will speak to Lord Beaulieu."

"Pray do not ask him for any money help," cried Dick, red-denying.

Brand laughed. "Don't be afraid, I will keep up your dignity; but from time immemorial it has been the proud privilege of great nobles to assist struggling genius. We must not deprive our worthy employer of his rights, especially as he is a capital fellow. His artistic Bohemian life in early days has done him a world of good."

"He is wonderfully frank and nice to his employés."

"Yes, it is a comfort to work for a man who knows what work is. By the way, there was a scraggy Scotchman at the Castle for a few days last week; did you see him?"

"I believe so. He was admiring the library and the big drawing-room when I passed through."

"He was greatly taken with the decorations. It seems he has been restoring an old family seat he bought back—he made a heap of money in China, I hear—and he has asked me to undertake the decorations. I hesitated, for the place is close to Edinburgh, and I hate the climate. However, the work will be in doors, and I don't know exactly what may turn up for the winter. This man's house will not be ready for me till October. Then in the spring I am in hopes Lord Beaulieu will renovate that old château of his in Dauphiny; it would be a delightful job, and if it can be managed I'll take you with me, Dick."

The young man's eyes sparkled. "You will! Why that is something beyond my highest hopes."

Brand took his pipe from his lips, and said with some emotion, "I'd do a good deal for your father's son; besides, I am under obligations to yourself, but you can't understand this. Now I am horridly tired, and I want to get a thorough rest and be fresh for a hard day's work to-morrow, so good-night. You can stay on here if you like, there are books and light." With a nod and a kindly smile he left the room.

Dick, who rose as he said good-night, drew a chair to the open window and fell into thought. His luck had certainly turned. What a wonderful piece of good fortune it was to have fallen in with a man like Brand; this at least was a legacy from his poor wandering, unthrifty, much-abused father. What a strong friendship must have existed between them; such faithfulness could hardly exist between two worthless men. But Brand, whatever his past life, and Dick instinctively felt it had been most irregular, was not worthless. At any rate such unearned kindness as he had heaped upon him should secure his warmest gratitude, his unstinted service.

If he was thus willing to associate him (Dick) in his work,

the long and toilsome way which lay before him would be wondrously smoothed and levelled—and what joy in the kind of work destined to fill his days! The young man's heart glowed with hope and delightful anticipation, only he wished Brand had not warned him against those Sunday rambles with Marjory. It was surprising how much more he enjoyed talking with Marjory than he used. No doubt she had grown gentler, more womanly and wiser than she used to be—that might be expected; but her bright observant remarks, her gleams of pathos, of kindly consideration, these were beyond what her early impetuous sauciness promised. How amusing she could be too; a pleasanter companion no brother could have. Brand might say what he liked, they would always be like brother and sister. It was hard to give up seeing her save at rare intervals, still there was truth in what Brand said. The apparent difference between his position and that of Marjory was so great as to make their being alone together an impropriety, especially as he must not explain their relationship. Well, not relationship, the connection between them—and Dick's cheek burned as he thought of the coarse misconception his fellow-workmen would put upon their acquaintance, should any of them meet him sauntering along with Marge. Dick's reflections here became confused and disturbing, so he turned his thoughts to George, and speculated how soon his chum would write to him, as he said he would whenever anything was settled about his going to sea.

Finally Dick extinguished the lamp and went wandering in the moonlight along the path towards the Priory, in a pleasant dreamy state of mind, full of vague bright hopes, of soft kindly fancies, seeing a delicious vista of possible success—distant certainly, but not beyond his reach.

The arrival of the Honourable Mrs. Maynard with her baby, her nurse, her maid, and a German courier, created a little stir in Lord Beaulieu's provisional household; but to the troop of workmen without it made no difference.

Lord Beaulieu was glad to direct his sister's attention to the improvements he was making.

Perhaps, in her present depressed condition, when few things possessed any interest whatever for her, the restoration of the family seat was more calculated than anything else to divert her thoughts from their ordinary sorrowful mood.

She seemed to enjoy, in a languid fashion, walking slowly round the terrace and through the courtyard, leaning on her brother's arm and listening to his explanations. Nurse and the baby were generally of the party, as the poor young mother could scarcely bear the child out of her sight.

He was a fine, fair, chubby infant of nearly four months old—full to the lips with abounding life, ready to jump out of his nurse's arms at every fresh object presented to his wandering eyes

—a perfect miracle of precocious intelligence to his admiring mother.

Though Mrs. Maynard shrank from society, it amused her faintly to talk with the architect, or discuss the harmony of colour with Brand, whom she noticed a good deal.

"That Mr. Brand is really quite a gentleman," she said to her brother, "and what taste he has! He was speaking to baby yesterday, and baby quite took to him. It is amazing to see such a mere infant showing distinct likings and dislikings. Yesterday I found him (I mean Mr. Brand) making a sketch in water colours of the western tower and a bit of landscape beyond—really exquisitely done! so I asked him if he could take likenesses, and added that I should be glad if he would paint baby. He was so frank and honest about it. He said it was too soon, that a month or two hence the darling would have more expression, and then he said he would like to paint him as the infant Hercules."

Lord Beaulieu smiled. "He is a clever fellow, but rather erratic. I met him some five or six years ago in South America, when he helped me in a slight difficulty, and for a week or two I saw a good deal of him; he seemed in a very unsettled state then, and what we used to term, in my own Bohemian days, 'down on his luck.' Then I met him last winter at Fleury St. Jean, the little town near my quarters in Dauphiny. He had been sketching there all the autumn, and was delayed by illness, bad cold, and low fever, so I looked after him a bit, and found him a pleasant well-informed fellow; though he was evidently much better off than when we met him in America, he was glad to find work, so I engaged him to do the decorations here, and I think I made a hit. Ah! Brand!" coming on him as they began to descend some steps leading to the shrubbery in the moat. "We have been talking of you. Mrs. Maynard tells me you have been making some sketches, very good sketches."

"Very slight things, Lord Beaulieu. As this is the men's dinner-hour I came down here to get some of the noontide effects on the side of the moat, and that mass of masonry that used to support the drawbridge. You see there is an oblique light upon it that brings out the ruggedness of the stones and their peculiar tints wonderfully."

"You are right. What a beautifier light is—set to work, or you will lose the effect."

Brand had already seated himself on a fragment of stone projecting from the bank, and settled his sketch-book on his knee.

Mrs. Maynard and her brother watched him for a few minutes, when Dick came down the path behind them, and raising his hat asked leave to pass, as he had a message for Mr. Brand. It was from the clerk of the works respecting some new staging which was to be put up in one of the rooms for the purpose of painting

the ceilings. Brand gave a few directions, and giving an eager glance at the sketch in progress, Dick, with another bow and lifting of his hat, sped back again.

"Who is that young man?" asked Mrs. Maynard. "I have noticed him several times. He is very good-looking, and even aristocratic-looking. It is very strange, but his face always seems familiar to me. Where could I have seen him? Who is he?"

"He is a very superior young fellow," returned Lord Beaulieu. "Brand, who seems to have adopted him, knew his people."

"Who is he, Mr. Brand? Not an ordinary workman, I am sure."

"No!" said Brand quickly, as he bent over his drawing. "His father was an artist, and an old comrade of mine; he died, or rather was drowned, early, and this boy had such a passion for architecture that he ran away from home to be a mere labourer among masons, so as to get the rudiments of the art he craves for."

"How very curious. Do you think he will succeed?"

"Yes, with a little judicious help."

"What is his name?" asked Mrs. Maynard.

"Cranston," returned Brand shortly.

"Cranston," she repeated. "How very odd, Cranston is one of the Maynard names."

"Oh! my old comrade was a South of England man, had no connection with the north; in fact, poor fellow, I doubt if he could claim any relations at all."

"Ah!" said Mrs. Maynard, and dropped the subject, fancying that Dick's father might have been illegitimate.

"Come," said Lord Beaulieu. "I want to get luncheon over soon, and take you for a drive to the Priory. We have not returned Mrs. Carteret's visit."

(To be continued.)

BEAUMARCHAIS.

By JOSEPH FORSTER.

BEAUMARCHAIS was born at Paris, in 1732, and was the son of a clock maker. He became a great favourite with the daughters of Louis XVI., who admired his musical talents.

I will introduce my subject by a few words on Beaumarchais's famous lawsuit.

Fifteen thousand pounds were left to him. The heir of the rest of the property, the Comte de la Blache, disputed the will. Beaumarchais won the first action. Then, improvident and daring as usual, he ran away with the mistress of a duke.

To prevent a duel, the duke and Beaumarchais were confined in prison—not the same, of course. While Beaumarchais was off the scene, the Comte de la Blache moved heaven and earth, and a worse place, against our unheroic hero. He seized his furniture, ruined him with law expenses, which was not difficult then, and is not difficult now. So that Beaumarchais, from the height of prosperity and fortune, was flung down into poverty and despair. His condition was so pitiable, that as he said, “he felt shame and pity for himself.” Beaumarchais was then forty years of age, his reputation was a little doubtful, and his genius was unknown. He was at bay, conquered, and apparently crushed; he was accused by his enemy of every possible enormity, inclusive of having poisoned his two wives; it was necessary that he should display energy, wit, genius; and he displayed them.

Beaumarchais was allowed to leave his prison for a few days. His judge was a M. Gusman, who was deeply engaged for the other side. Beaumarchais tried to get at him, but could not succeed. He was told that his wife was get-at-able, and if bribed might influence her husband. He sent her one hundred louis in gold, and fifteen louis in silver, and a gold watch set with diamonds. This present was given to obtain an audience of the judge, with the understanding that all should be returned if the case was lost. It was lost, and all was returned except the fifteen louis in silver.

Then our clever friend began to complain in a way that attracted and riveted attention.

The foolish judge, who perhaps did not know all the details, accused Beaumarchais of trying to corrupt him.

Then Beaumarchais published his account of the whole affair, written in a style which excited and amused the public. These

memoirs glittered with wit, malice, and a kind of boyish gaiety and apparent simplicity, that was a new thing in literature. Listen to what Voltaire said of them.

"I have read all the Memoirs of Beaumarchais. I was never so much amused. I begin to think that that brilliant madcap has some reason against all the world. What trickeries! Oh, heaven! what horrors! What a man!" exclaimed he again. "He combines everything—pleasantry, reason, gaiety, force, pathos, all kinds of eloquence, and he does not appear to search for any of these qualities, yet he confounds his adversaries and gives lessons to his judges. His simplicity enchants me; I forgive him his imprudences and his freaks of temper."

These imprudences and freaks of temper, according to Voltaire, were those of a passionate man, in the extremest danger, justly irritated, but naturally very agreeable and very eloquent.

"It is absurd to accuse such a man of having poisoned his wives, he is too gay and too amusing for that."

The scene at the examination of Madame Gusman is deliciously funny. In her examinations by Beaumarchais, he made her say black was white, he enraged her and appeased her; when she did not know what else to say, nor how to disentangle her contradictions, she accounted for all by indisposition; when he pushed her too far, she threatened to box his ears; when he complimented her by saying that she only appeared eighteen instead of thirty, she smiled upon him, finding him no longer impertinent, and even went the length of asking him to conduct her to her carriage.

I must conclude this part of my subject by Beaumarchais' portrait of himself.

"And you who have known me, you who have followed me always, my friends, say if you have ever seen anything in me than a man constantly gay; loving with an equal power, study and pleasure; inclined to raillery, but without bitterness; and even welcoming it from others against myself when seasoned with wit; sustaining, perhaps with too much ardour, his opinion when he believes it just, but honouring emphatically, and without envy, all those he recognizes as superior; easy on his interests, even to negligence; active when he is spurred, idle and stagnant after the storm; careless when happy, but pushing constancy and serenity in misfortune to a degree that astonishes his most familiar friends."

The "*Barber of Seville*" was first represented on February 23rd, 1775. The public, on the faith of those who had heard the piece read, expected so much wit and fun that it was at first disappointed. Besides, the play was too long. Beaumarchais reduced the five acts to four. He removed the fifth wheel from the coach; it then rattled along as never a piece rattled before. When Beaumarchais published it he entitled the play: "*The Barber of*

Seville, Comedy in Four Acts, Represented and Condemned at the Theatre of the Comédie Française."

At first Figaro was not the caustic, philosophical personage we know so well. Beaumarchais' idea was: "Giving rein to my gay character, I have attempted in my 'Barber of Seville' to restore to the theatre that frank, open gaiety, in allying it with the light tone of our pleasantry of to-day; but as even that was a kind of novelty, the piece was bitterly opposed. It appeared that I had shaken the State." The piece does not hang fire for a moment. It glitters; it sparkles; it has the irony of Voltaire, with some of the breadth of Rabelais. Figaro is as much a creation as Don Quixote or Mephistopheles. Its fault is almost too much wit—but that is so rare a fault, that in a comedy it becomes a virtue. Beaumarchais once spoke of a man "who had much wit, but economised it a little too carefully." That is what Beaumarchais never did. In that respect he resembled Sheridan, who puts jewels of wit and glittering epigrams into the mouths of the servants. Still there are always plenty of dull, stupid plays to be seen when one feels surfeited by the wit of a Beaumarchais and a Sheridan. Bad plays are always with us. "The Marriage of Figaro" was written in 1775 or 1776. But it required more wit to get it played than to write it. He had against him the king, the magistrates, the lieutenant of police, and all the great officials. Do you wonder? Listen to this:

"FIGARO.—I was born for a courtier.

"SUSANNAH.—People say it is a very difficult business.

"FIGARO.—Receive, take, and ask for more; there is the secret in three words."

Then the consummate astuteness of the man; he tries to disarm wrath by saying: "Only little men fear little writings."

Figaro on politics says: "To pretend to be ignorant of what one knows, of knowing all when one knows nothing; of understanding what one does not comprehend, of not hearing what one hears very well; to pretend to power beyond one's forces; make a grand mystery of hiding nothing; to shut oneself up to cut pens; to appear very profound, when one is only void and hollow; to play ill or well the great man; employ spies and pension traitors; to soften the seals of letters; and try to ennoble the poverty of the means by the importance of the object: if these are not the secret of politics, let me die."

Let us listen to Figaro on law and lawyers: "The custom, Mr. Doublefee, is often an abuse; the client, if not altogether a fool, knows his own case better than certain advocates, who in a cold perspiration shout and gesticulate, and knowing everything, except the leading facts of the case, embarrass themselves as little about ruining their client as boring the audience and sending the judges to sleep. After which performance they are more conceited than if they had composed the *oratio pro Murena*."

There is a fine passage in the "Marriage of Figaro," where the countess says :

"I feel so bewildered that I cannot connect two ideas."

Susannah replies :

"Ah! madame, quite the contrary; and it is that which teaches me how the refinements of the best society enable ladies of your position to tell falsehoods with such exquisite grace that it is impossible to discover them."

Then the dialogue with Marceline, of whom Figaro had borrowed money, and promised to marry her if he could not repay it. As you are aware, Marceline turns out to be Figaro's mother. Marceline, in speaking of the faults of her past life, says :

"Yes, my life has been deplorable, and more so even than you believe. I do not deny my faults, to-day has proved them. But it is very hard to expiate them after thirty years of repentance. I was born with good dispositions, and I acted on them so soon as my reason asserted itself. But in the age of folly and illusions, of inexperience and of need, when tempters surround one, and cruel poverty stabs—what has a girl to oppose to such enemies? Those who perhaps have ruined ten unfortunate people judge us severely.

"FIGARO.—The most guilty are often the least generous.

"MARCELINE (excitedly).—Men, more than ungrateful, who brand by their contempt the playthings of their passions, it is you who should be punished for the errors of our youth; you and your magistrates, so vain of the right to judge us, and who take away from us, by their guilty negligence, all honest means of existence. There is hardly an occupation left for women. Their right to provide for the ornamentation of their own sex is denied them; thousands of the other sex rob them of honest work.

"FIGARO (angrily).—Even the soldiers are allowed to sew.

"MARCELINE (passionately).—In the highest ranks women only obtain a contemptuous consideration; pleased by the apparent flattery, but undergoing real servitude; treated as minors in our rights, but as majors for our faults! Ah, under all these aspects your conduct creates horror or pity."

The "Marriage of Figaro" was first performed on September 26th, 1783. Beaumarchais had tried again and again to put this masterpiece of wit, wisdom, and irony on the stage. On June 12th, 1783, he had made every preparation for its performance. The tickets were issued, a file of carriages were at the doors, when Louis XVI. sent express orders to the actors not to perform the piece. To this order of the king, Beaumarchais, enraged beyond measure, exclaimed: "Well, gentlemen, if the king will not have it performed here, I swear, that rather than not play it, it shall be acted in the choir of Notre Dame."

Rebellion was in the air. Genius defied prerogative; that is the prerogative of genius.

But after delay upon delay, extending over years, the first night came. I ought to say that Beaumarchais, one of the most astute men who ever breathed, had read the piece to all the most important and influential people in Paris. He had tickled with consummate tact their curiosity.

The first performance was not attended by the queen, only through illness, but the Count d'Artois and the Duchesse de Polignac were there. The flower of the French aristocracy came to laugh and applaud a piece which led as much as anything to their ruin by rendering them contemptible and ridiculous. An eyewitness said: "Beaumarchais was intoxicated with excitement, and when some of us complained of the heat, instead of having the windows opened he broke them with his cane, so that people said after the piece that he doubly broke the glasses."

There we have the man—ardent, passionate, daring. Beaumarchais once said, "An author means a darer."

Strengthened by his success, Beaumarchais persuaded the comedians to perform his piece again, and was only stopped by the lieutenant of police.

At last, the 27th April, 1784, the piece was played in Paris.

The following account is from some memoirs of the day:

"To-day must have been a great day for Beaumarchais, who loves noise and scandal" [he loved a good advertisement], "for he had the satisfaction of drawing in his train not only the ordinary curious public and lovers of the stage, but the whole Court, princes of the blood, princes of the royal family; of receiving forty letters in one hour from gentlemen of all conditions asking for orders and to be allowed the honour of applauding him; of seeing Madame the Duchesse de Bourbon send her footman for tickets at eleven o'clock in the morning, although the office would not be open till four in the afternoon; of seeing decorated noblemen elbowing lacqueys in trying to get tickets; of seeing ladies of title, forgetting all decency and all modesty, shut themselves in the boxes of the actresses in the morning, and dine there under their protection, in the hope of being first; of seeing at last the guard at the theatre dispersed, the doors battered in, the iron bars give way and break under the efforts of the assailants."

"More than one duchesse," said Grimm, "thought herself very fortunate to obtain a seat in the balcony, where ladies are usually ashamed to be seen, on a wretched stool by the side of 'unfortunate females.'"

"Three hundred persons," said La Harpe, "have dined at the Comédie in the boxes of the actors, so as to be sure of having places, and at the opening of the doors the crush was so great that three persons were stifled."

This piece was played over one hundred times, and was a great political and social event, and led to other more important social and political events, as we know.

The "Barber of Seville" was gay, brilliant, witty, and amusing. The "Marriage of Figaro" is bitter, caustic, ironical. Napoleon said of it: "It was the Revolution already in action." La Harpe said of it: "It is easy to conceive the delight of a public charmed to amuse itself at the expense of authority, which allows itself to be ridiculed on the boards." But what did the gay, frivolous, gilded flies of fashion care, except to be amused, about the caustic irony and bitter wit of the dialogue? It was a new sensation to people who had given up all hope of obtaining another. The same people ran after Rousseau's "Julie," in spite of its scorn and contempt for them and their doings. Beaumarchais stabbed and tickled them; they only laughed. They seemed to agree with the doctor in "Figaro": "My faith! sir, men having only to choose between stupidity and folly, where I do not see profit I would have pleasure; so live, pleasure! Who knows if the world will last three weeks longer?"

The old order of things in France might have lasted many years longer if its members had not listened that night, and a hundred more nights, with transport to that gay, brilliant, insolent mockery of itself—if it had not taken a great part in its own undoing. Society was rotten. Beaumarchais, in the wittiest way, told it such was the case; and the audience agreed with him, and admired his penetration in finding it out and his wit in displaying it so amusingly.

Let me here introduce a few of Beaumarchais' sallies from the "Barber."

The first is at that charmingly-managed meeting of Figaro and Almaviva under the windows of Rosina's abode. Figaro has formerly been employed by the Count Almaviva. In the course of conversation Figaro says:

"I thought myself too happy in being forgotten, persuaded as I am that a great man does one enough good when he does not do one any harm.

"ALMAVIVA.—You were a wild fellow when in my service.

"FIGARO.—Eh, *Mon Dieu*, my lord, would you wish a poor man to be without faults?

"ALMAVIVA.—You were idle, dissipated.

"FIGARO.—From the virtues people exact from a servant, does your excellency know many masters who are worthy to be valets?"

Then Figaro tries his fortune as a dramatic author. He thus describes his failure:

"In truth I know not how it was I did not succeed, because I filled the pit with excellent workers; hands to clap (I had forbidden gloves, canes, all which would deaden the applause); and on my honour, before the performance the *café* had shown the best disposition towards me. But the efforts of the cabal—

"ALMAVIVA.—Ah! the cabal. The author fell?

"FIGARO.—Just like another. Why not? They hissed me. But my good angel has caused me to find my old master. I left Madrid because I saw that the republic of letters was made up of wolves, always armed one against the other and given up to the contempt to which this ridiculous ferocity conducts them—all the insects, the mosquitoes, the envious, the penny-a-liners, the critics, the publishers, the censors, and all other parasites which attach themselves to the skin of the unhappy literary man and finish by dissecting him and devouring the little substance which remains; tired of writing, tired of myself, disgusted with others, buried in debt and without cash; at last convinced that the useful revenue of the razor is preferable to the vain honours of the pen, I quitted Madrid, and, my baggage on my back, travelled philosophically over the two Castilles, La Mancha, La Estramadura, the Sierra Morena, the Andalusias; welcomed in one town, imprisoned in another, and everywhere superior to events; praised by these, blamed by those; enjoying good times, supporting the bad; laughing at fools, defying the wicked; you find me at last established at Seville, and ready to serve your excellency in all that it may please him to order.

"ALMAVIVA.—Who has given you so gay a philosophy?

"FIGARO.—The custom of misfortune. I am eager to laugh at all for fear of being obliged to weep."

I think even in the brightest touches of Figaro's wit you will find a vein of sadness, as in the last quotation. But the grand soliloquy of Figaro in the "Marriage"—when the poor fellow thinks the count has an appointment with his intended wife, the only being he has ever had to love and the only being he thought loved him—I don't think I can omit a word of it. The gay Count Almoviva has married Rosina, and tired of her in the usual aristocratic way. I came across a story the other day to this effect: A servant was complaining of some one who would insist on shooting over his master's land. The servant said he was a gentleman. "How do you know that?" "Because, sir, he keeps twenty horses and another man's wife."

This is Figaro's soliloquy:

"O woman! woman! Creature feeble and deceitful! No animal can be untrue to its instinct: is it thine to deceive? No, my noble master, you shall not succeed; I will prevent it. Because you are a great lord you think yourself a great genius! Nobility, fortune, places, all that creates so much pride. What have you done to deserve so much? You gave yourself the trouble of being born, nothing more. Beyond that a very ordinary man; while as to myself, good heavens! Lost in the obscure crowd, it has been necessary to display more science and calculations to subsist only, than your class has shown to govern Spain and its colonies, and you would play Some one comes it is she

it is no one. The night is as black as the devil, and here am I playing the foolish part of husband, though I am only half married! Could anything be more extraordinary than my destiny? Son of I know not who, stolen by robbers, educated by them in all that was bad, I became disgusted and would try an honest career. I was repulsed everywhere! I learnt chemistry, surgery, and all the credit of a great lord could hardly put into my hand a veterinary lancet! Tired of adding to the suffering of sick beasts, and to do something quite different, I rushed to the theatre and composed a comedy in which I described the life of a seraglio. Being a Spanish author, I thought I could snap my fingers at Mahomet without fear. Immediately an envoy from I know not where complained that I offended in my verses the Sublime Porte, Persia, the whole of Egypt, the realms of Barca, of Tripoli, of Tunis, of Algeria, and of Morocco; and behold my comedy damned, to please Mahometan princes, of whom not one, I believe, knew how to read, and who politely call us dogs of Christians. Not being able to debase genius, fools revenge themselves by ill-treating it. My cheeks became hollow, my means were exhausted. A question then arising on the nature of riches, and as it is not necessary to possess things in order to reason on them, not possessing a farthing I wrote on the value and use of money. Very soon I saw from a hackney-coach the drawbridge of a strong prison lowered for me, on entering which I left outside hope and liberty.

"How I should like to hold one of these powerful titled mushrooms, so light-hearted about the evil they command, after some signal disgrace has cut down his pride:—I would say to him . . . that printed impertinences have no importance except in places where people stop their course; that, without the liberty of blaming there can be no praise; and that only little men fear little writings.

"Tired of nourishing an obscure prisoner, they dropped me one day in the street; and as it is necessary to dine, though one be no more in prison, I cut my pen, and asking every one I met what was the most burning question of the day, they told me that during my economical retreat there had been established in Madrid a system of free trade in all productions, that it extended even to those of the press; and that, provided I did not speak in my writings of the Government, nor of religion, nor of political matters, nor of questions of morality, nor of people in place, nor of any powerful corporation, nor of the opera, nor of any other spectacles, nor of anybody who was anything, I could print all I liked freely, under the inspection of two or three censors. In order to profit by this delightful liberty, I announced a newspaper, and believing that I was not imitating any other name I called it *The Useless Journal*. But in a moment I see raised against me a thousand poor penny-a-liners. I am suppressed, and

behold me again without employment! Despair is about to seize me. They thought they had a place for me, but by misfortune I was just the right man for it: a good arithmetician was required, therefore the post was given to a dancer. Nothing was left for me to do than to steal. I made myself the head of a gambling-house; then I supped in town, and the most polite people opened their houses to me, retaining for themselves three-fourths of the profits. I commenced to recoup; I began even to understand that, for getting on in the world, knowledge of the world was better than knowledge of anything else. But as every one stole around me, in exacting that I alone should be honest I nearly starved again. I quitted the world, and twenty feet of water were about to divide us for ever, when some beneficent God recalled me to my first trade. I returned to my lather and strop; then leaving the smoke of fame for the fools who are nourished by it, and false shame in the middle of the road, as too heavy for a tramp, I went on shaving from town to town, and at last lived without care. A great lord staying at Seville recognized me; I arranged his marriage, and for the price of having gained by my cares his wife, he would now intercept mine! I have just escaped falling into an abyss. I was about to marry my own mother, when the secret of my birth is discovered, and I find both my parents at once. They dispute. It is you, it is he, it is she, it is thee; no, it is not I; who are we all then? O maddening confusion! Why do such things happen to me? Why these things, and not others? Who has fixed them on my head? Forced to pursue a path on which I entered without knowing, as I shall leave it without wishing, I have scattered as many flowers as my gaiety would allow me; yet I say my gaiety without knowing if it is mine more than the rest, nor even what is that me about which I occupy myself; an unformed assemblage of unknown parts; then a wretched imbecile life; a gay little animal; a young man ardent for pleasure, having all the tastes for enjoyment, adopting all conditions in order to live; master here, valet there, just as it pleases fortune; ambitious through vanity, laborious by necessity, but idle . . . with delight! Orator, if necessary; poet, for amusement; musician occasionally; amorous by temperament, I have seen all, done all, and am tired of all. All illusions are now destroyed, and thoroughly disabused . . . disabused! . . . Susan, Susan, Susan! what torments you give me! . . . I hear steps . . . They come. The crisis has arrived."

Can one imagine anything more true and scathing than this soliloquy? But of all the instances of crass folly on record, I think that of the gilded butterflies who laughed and fought for places for one hundred nights to listen to what held them up to ridicule and contempt is really the most stupendous.

Beaumarchais was the pioneer of destruction of the old order

of things in France. He did not use a pike or a torch; he used what was infinitely more dangerous, the brightest and wittiest pen; a pen that shot sparks into barrels of gunpowder which were all nicely arranged for him. If there is anything that is more dangerous and deadly to unjust privileges than another, it is genius. As Dr. Johnson once said, "Dukes and peers don't like men of genius, because they don't like their mouths shut, sir." The same thought must have struck you at meetings. Some great man—I mean great through money and title—will rise to address the audience, which will, after a few seconds, begin to droop on all sides. After some time the gentleman will subside, on which the audience will give a sigh of relief, as if a dentist had finished tugging at a tooth; then some poor devil of a genius will get on his legs, and after a few words, uttered with a beautiful rhythmic ring, the audience will become magnetic, and will cheer, laugh, and have what our American friends call a good time. But our exalted friends suffer so from *ennui*, that feeling as they do such contempt for writing-fellows, they laugh at the sharp epigrammatic sayings—I mean at those they are able to understand, which are usually the poorest and weakest—of the poor genius and don't realize that he is throwing stones at their glass houses; in fact, they very likely have not realized the fact that their houses are glass.

A man of real genius patronised and petted by the aristocracy always reminds me of a tiger cub brought up on the domestic hearthrug and treated like a purring pussy. They think he is a purring pussy. He thinks so too very likely, but he is nothing of the kind; the terrible claws are there and the terrible strength to use them.

We will now turn to a less-known episode in the adventurous life of our shady hero. I refer to the subject of the relations between Beaumarchais' sister and Clavico, of which Goethe made a play.

Beaumarchais had two sisters settled in Madrid. The elder was married, and the younger was engaged to be married to a young man of promise, the keeper of the royal archives.

One day Beaumarchais' father came to him in great distress and agitation, with a letter from his elder daughter stating that Clavico had basely deserted her sister and disgraced her in the eyes of her friends and acquaintances, and that in consequence of the shock her life was in great danger.

The letter finished with these words: "If my brother has sufficient credit to gain us the support of the French ambassador, his excellency might avert the evil that this perfidious man has done us, both by his conduct and his threats. Everybody in Madrid knows that my sister is blameless."

Now I will let Beaumarchais speak for himself.

"My father came to find me at Versailles, and gave me my sister's letter. 'See, my son,' said he, 'what you can do for these

two unfortunate girls, they are not less your sisters than the others.'"

His father also showed him other letters from the French ambassador to the elder sister, in which he expressed the greatest esteem and consideration for them both.

"I read all the letters," says Beaumarchais; "they reassured me as to the conduct of my sister, and the words of my father, 'they are not less your sisters than the others,' penetrated to the bottom of my heart. 'Take courage,' I said to my father, 'I will take a course which may surprise you, but which appears to me to be the most certain and the wisest.'"

In short, Beaumarchais, with characteristic impetuosity, packed his portmanteau, got a few letters and a great deal of cash and started like a rocket to Madrid.

He arrives, sees his sister, assures himself that her conduct has been perfect, that she has been the victim of an ambitious schemer, takes a friend with him, and meets Clavico at an assembly. He introduces himself as a stranger who had heard of his literary reputation, and is invited by Clavico to take chocolate with him the next morning at nine o'clock.

Beaumarchais goes with his friend the next morning. The rest shall be told in the sparkling, vivid words of Beaumarchais.

"The next morning, at half-past eight, I was with him. I found him in a splendid mansion, which he told me belonged to a friend in the ministry, and that while he was away he used it as his own.

"'I am sent, sir,' said I, 'by a literary society, to establish in all towns through which I pass a literary correspondence with the most learned men in them. As no Spaniard writes better than the author of the articles in *The Thinker*, to whom I have the honour of speaking, whose literary merit is so great that the king has confided to him the care of the royal archives, I did not think that I could better serve my friends than in connecting them with a gentleman of your merit.'

"I saw that he was delighted and flattered by my proposition. He talked freely on the subject of literature. He caressed me with his eye; his tone became affectionate; he talked like an angel, and became radiant with pride and pleasure.

"In the midst of his joy he asked me what my business was in Spain? He would be most happy to be of service. 'I accept with gratitude your flattering offers, and will not have, sir, any secrets from you.'

"Then I presented my friend to him, saying that he was not a stranger to the subject of this conversation.

"I told my story thus: 'A French merchant of limited means had several correspondents in Spain. One of the richest, in passing through Paris nine or ten years ago, made him this proposition—"Give me two of your five daughters; I will take them with me to Madrid; they shall live with me, a solitary old bachelor,

make the happiness of my last years, and shall succeed to my fortune."

"The eldest, who was already married, and one of her sisters were confided to his care. Two years after this gentleman died and left them nothing, except the embarrassment of keeping up the business. In spite of difficulties, by the assistance of kind friends, they succeeded.

"At this time a young man presented himself at their house. Notwithstanding his poverty, the ladies, seeing his great eagerness for study, assisted him as much as possible.

"Full of ambition, he formed the project of publishing in Madrid a periodical resembling the English *Spectator*. He received from his friends encouragement and help of every kind. This paper was a great success. Then, animated by the hope of making himself a career, he proposed to marry the young French lady.

"The elder sister told him that he must first succeed; and when some employment, court favour, or some other means of subsistence had given him the right to think of her sister, if she preferred him to other admirers she would give her assent.' (Clavico at this moved uneasily in his seat; and I, without appearing to notice him, continued.)

"The young lady, touched by the merits of the man who pursued her, refused several advantageous offers, and preferring to wait until he who had loved her for four years had made the success his friends dared to hope for him, encouraged him to give to his paper the imposing title of *The Thinker*.' (Here my man almost dropped off his seat.)

"The paper,' I continued with an icy coolness, 'had a prodigious success. The king himself, amused by its ability, gave the author public testimony of his benevolence. He was promised the first available place. Then he drove away all other admirers by his constant and public attentions. The marriage was only delayed by the expectation of a post promised to the author. At last the appointment arrived, after six years' delay, and the lover fled. (Here my man heaved an involuntary sigh, and when conscious of it, blushed with confusion. I took notice of all without stopping.)

"The affair had made too much noise for people to see the end with indifference. The sisters had taken a house large enough for two families; the banns were published. This outrage enraged the common friends of each, who employed themselves eagerly to revenge the insult. The French ambassador took part in the matter; but when this man learnt that the lady had such strong support, fearing a power which might overturn in a moment his rising fortune, he came and cast himself at the feet of his irritated mistress. In his turn he employed all his friends to appease her, and as the anger of a betrayed woman is usually disguised love, all was arranged; the preparations for the marriage were recommenced, the banns re-published, and they were to be

married in three days. The reconciliation had created as much excitement as the rupture. He had to demand the consent of his chief. Before starting, he said: "My friends, preserve me the heart of my mistress until I return from *Situ-real*, and arrange all things so that immediately on my return we can go to the altar together."

"At this point I deepened my voice, and fixing him with my eye, continued:

"He returned the day after next; but instead of leading his victim to the altar, he told the unfortunate girl that he had changed his intention a second time, and would not marry her. Her indignant friends rushed to him immediately. The insolent man threw away all regard to decency, and defied them to injure him, telling them that if the French ladies tried to punish him, they must be careful that he did not ruin them in a country where they were without support.

"At this news the poor girl fell into convulsions, which made her friends fear for her life. At the height of their desolation the elder sister wrote to her family a description of the public outrage they had sustained. This account moved the heart of her brother to such a degree that he determined to come to clear up this entangled affair, and he made but one bound from Paris to Madrid. I am that brother! I have quitted country, duty, family, business, pleasures, to come to avenge in Spain an innocent and unhappy sister. I am here, armed with right and firmness, to unmask a traitor, to write in letters of blood his soul on his face; that traitor is yourself!"

"Try to form a picture of this astonished man, stupefied by my harangue, his mouth open by surprise, which appeared to have frozen his power of speech; the same face which a short time ago was radiant with pleasure, darkening by degrees, the eyes losing their brightness, every feature lengthening and assuming a leaden hue. He tried to stammer some excuses. 'Do not interrupt me, sir; you have nothing to say to me and much to listen to. To commence, have the goodness to declare before this gentleman, who has come expressly with me from France, if by any want of faith, lightness, weakness, bad-temper, or any other vice whatever, my sister has deserved the double outrage that you have had the cruelty of publicly inflicting on her.' 'No, sir; I acknowledge *Dona Maria*, your sister, to be a lady full of talent, graces, and virtue.' 'Has she given you any subject of complaint since you have known her?' 'Never, never.' 'Why then, monster,' said I, rising, 'had you the barbarity to treat her as you have done, only because her heart preferred you to ten other better men?' 'Ah! sir, there have been instigations, counsels; if you only knew. . . .' 'That is enough.'

"Then turning towards my friend: 'You have heard the justification of my sister, go and publish it. What I have now to say

to this gentleman does not require a witness.' My friend went. Clavico, more than astonished, rose in his turn. I made him sit. 'Now, sir, that we are alone, this is my project, and I hope you will approve it.

"'It will suit your arrangements and mine that you should not marry my sister; and you feel that I do not come here to play the absurd part of a brother in a play who insists on marrying his sister; but you have outraged most impudently a lady of honour, because you believed she was without support in a foreign country; that proceeding is characteristic of a vulgar and cowardly man. You must therefore commence by admitting, in your own handwriting, of your own free will, all your doors open and your servants in the room, who will not understand you, because we will speak French, that you are an abominable man who has deceived, betrayed, outraged my sister without any cause; and your declaration in my hands, I shall go to my ambassador at Aranjuez, I will show him your writing, I will then have it printed at once. After to-morrow the town and the Court shall be inundated with it. I have powerful friends here, time, and money; all shall be employed to ruin you, to pursue you in every way without pause, until the resentment of my sister is appeased and she commands me to cease.'

"'I will not make such a declaration,' said Clavico in an altered voice. 'I believe it, because, perhaps, in your place I would not do it myself. But this is the only alternative, write or do not write: from this moment I remain with you; I leave you no more; wherever you go I will follow you, until, impatient of my company, you deliver yourself to me behind Buenretiro. If I am more fortunate than you, sir, without seeing my ambassador, without speaking to any one here, I will take my dying sister in my arms, place her in my carriage, and return to France with her. If, on the contrary, fortune favours you, all is finished for me. I will make my will before meeting you. You will have every advantage over us; you may even laugh at our expense. Order them to bring you breakfast.'

We need hardly say that before such wit, courage, and resources, Clavico threw up his arms. He begged Beaumarchais on his knees not to ruin him. His surrender to the brother was as cowardly as the outrage inflicted on the sister. Beaumarchais at last felt pity for the poor wretch, and eventually gave him hope of pardon. He knew very well that his poor sister really loved the good-looking, clever scoundrel. The reconciliation was celebrated, the banns were re-published, when the miserable wretch took flight again. Beaumarchais was warned by a friendly officer to leave Spain at once. "You have not a moment to lose. Go at once, or to-morrow morning you will be arrested in your bed. The order is given; I have come to warn you. Clavico is a monster; he has prejudiced every one against you. Fly, fly at once, or,

confined in a dungeon, you will have neither protection nor defence."

Beaumarchais' reply was :

"I fly! I save myself! I will perish rather. Do not try to persuade me, my friends; provide a carriage for me with six mules by four o'clock to-morrow morning, and I will go to Aranjuez."

"I then shut myself up. I was nearly mad; my heart was in a vice; nothing could calm my agitation. I threw myself into a chair, where I remained two hours, incapable of forming an idea or a resolution."

In a state of positive intoxication he performed the twelve hours' journey to Aranjuez. He rushed into the presence of the French ambassador, who told him that Clavico and his powerful friends had acted with such consummate art that he could do nothing for him except retard his arrest for a few hours. Beaumarchais left the ambassador more desperate than ever. He then rushed to a personal friend of the king's, who listened to his story with interest and sympathy. This gentleman introduced Beaumarchais to the cabinet of the king, to whom he read the history of the whole affair. The king instantly ordered the disgrace and dismissal of Clavico from all his posts. Then the wretched Clavico wrote to Beaumarchais for pity and assistance. And our fiery, good-hearted friend was fool enough to plead for the villain; but, thanks to the better sense of those who knew the facts of the case, he pleaded in vain.

Why are we all so in love with men like Beaumarchais?

I think because of the interest they take in humanity. Careful, prudent, painstaking, exemplary persons may be very laudable, very respectable; but although they may gain our approval, they never gain our love. While our erratic, sparkling, loving, quarrelling, disreputable Beaumarchais, Fielding, Mirabeau, Sheridan, Molière, Burns, live in our hearts, and their very names make our eyes sparkle with delight. When it is a question of doing a generous action, they don't stop to count the cost. They are not always thinking of the opinion of Mrs. Grundy. The one thing needful with them is not a big balance at the bankers; they would not see a man they call friend go to ruin for £50 when they could easily spare £500. In short, our dear scapegraces, with all their faults and shortcomings, can love some things and some persons even more than themselves. And we foolish people who love them are not such egregious idiots as some very respectable and cold-blooded people suppose.

TEN TO ONE ON THE "SCREW."

By PHILIP GASKELL,

AUTHOR OF "THE SENIOR MAJOR."

"DO you think he means to put us up? I'll go, I think, if he does, for I'm too hard up just now to stand being a week at an inn on my own hook."

The speaker is a young officer in the uniform of the Chalkshire Rifles. He has rather a vapid expression of countenance, but might, save for the visible effects of too early dissipation, be described as good-looking. His name is Grimshaw, and his remark calls forth a roar of laughter from two brother-officers who happen to be present. In the barrack-room appertaining to the oldest of the party, the three young fellows are, on one hot July night, "killing the enemy," to wit, the mighty "reaper" who by this playful pseudonym is by these frolicsome spirits familiarly spoken of.

"Put us up!" repeats Jemmy Fancourt with a broad grin on his cheery face; "I like that. Fancy your having been three months in the Chalkshires without having found out that Bill de Beevor was never known to give anything for nothing. He takes deuced good care, as any one can see by his letter, that there shall be no misunderstanding in the matter of putting up. Cracks up the 'Saumon Inn' no end, as having first-rate grub, and that kind of thing. Now, I really wonder," continued Fancourt thoughtfully, "what put it into old Bill's head to write to you fellows about these Morlaix races?"

"Thinks it would be a jolly lark between returns," suggested Tom Grimshaw, as he blew towards the ceiling a light smoke from his cigar.

"Has an idea, perhaps, that we shall like to see the country," surmised an evidently "home-keeping" youth, whose "homely wits" rendered him the victim of many a good-humoured shower of chaff.

"Wishes to improve your mind, eh, Talmash? Zeal for the service," laughed Fancourt. "I'll just tell you boys now what it is, and then you can't say afterwards that you haven't been forewarned. De Beevor is just the most knowing card in England, and if he doesn't run you in for something considerable I'm a Dutchman. He is, as we all know, about the best gentleman rider going——"

"Oh! I'm not afraid of being done," put in, with the proverbial rashness of youth, Second Lieutenant Tom Grimshaw. At which boast there was another burst of hilarity, it being in the regiment an universally accepted fact that if there existed a chap who was safe to be taken in, that chap was Thomas Grimshaw.

Lord de Beevor, for such was the real style and title of the ex-rifleman on whom had been bestowed by irreverent youngsters the sobriquet of Bill, was the grandson of a very high and puissant marquis indeed; but pending the said Bill's elevation to rank and honours, he was, it must be owned, rather a low little personage, his only claims to distinction being based upon his skill as a steeplechase rider, and his excellence as a rifle shot. As a consequence of these merits, and also, it is to be feared, owing to a certain British weakness for a "lord," from which some of the Chalkshire Rifles were not wholly exempt, many of the men who had known him in the corps were rather proud of the fact that he had belonged to it. A serious quarrel with Lord de Beevor and his grandfather, whose son and heir had died suddenly a year before, had resulted in the migration, *pro tem.*, of the younger man to the then cheap, and not greatly visited by tourists, locality of Lower Brittany. There, in an old Carlist château, partly occupied by an ex-English lawyer of indifferent repute, and his good-looking, underbred wife, the young scion of aristocracy, who was not, to borrow a French term, "very well viewed" by the aborigines of the country, roughed it on ten pounds a week, paid every Saturday to his order. On that sum, however, he contrived to keep a couple of nags and a small but useful pack of hounds, for in those days there was no lack of wild boar in the woods; and it was with the prospect of a boar-hunt, added to the excitement of a steeplechase, that Bill de Beevor had contrived to lure to the French Peninsula the two young fellows of whom, by the aliases of Grimshaw and Talmash, I have already written.

It was a long journey to Quimperlé, the town whither they were bound, and more than once as they jogged slowly along the Landes country, the travellers, on whom the picturesque aspects of the route were clearly thrown away, reproached themselves in no measured terms for the folly of which they had been guilty. It was late in the evening when, tired and hungry, they reached the "Hôtel du Saumon," an unassuming little hostelry standing on the shore of the Quimperlé river—a stream which, owing to the neglect by the adjacent landlords of their piscatorial rights, affords but little sport to lovers of the "gentle art." Over both the feelings and the language, given vent to by the aggrieved Englishmen when the best food which the inn could produce was set before them, it behoves us not to dwell. They were neither of them quite new to foreign parts, and to the every-day treatment which a well-to-do traveller in a Paris hotel is safe to meet

with; but if they had seen visions and dreamt dreams of such prefatory luxuries as a dainty *pistolet*, snow-white in its interior, and of thin pats of delicate butter reposing in a rampart of ice, they were doomed to signal disappointment. The loaf, three feet long at the very least, was flung upon the long, but for the nonce empty *table d'hôte*, by a red-faced Breton peasant-girl, underneath whose sonsy arm it had been reposing, and it certainly needed the sauce of hunger to induce the visitors to partake either of its half-sour and wholly whitey-brown component parts, or of the *bifteck aux pommes de terre* which was eventually set before them. The *vin du pays* was pronounced execrable, nor was the cider, on which the Breton peasant rarely misses an opportunity of *endimanchéing* himself, declared to be better tippie. Happily, however, the sufferers having youth and good health on their side contrived not only to live through these inflictions, but to be tolerably "fit" for the boar-hunt, at which (to them) novel species of sport they fully expected to distinguish themselves. Immediately therefore, after an early breakfast, they started with their respective munitions of war in a country *carriole* drawn by a sturdy Pontalec stallion for Château Keratry.

On the road—a distance of some five miles—to that retired residence they took note, much to their amusement, of numerous passing horsemen, on their way, like themselves, to "*la chasse*." The costumes of these "noble gentlemen sportsmen" were freely commented on by the Englishmen, not only *en route*, but on arriving at the château.

"By Jove! did you ever see such guys?" exclaimed Talmash. "Look at that fellow in the pea-green coat and hunting horn!"

"And that chap coming on, with his wooden buttons as big as dollars, and some kind of beast or bird on every one of them! Such seats, too, as they have! I wonder we haven't seen a cropper yet, but we shall, I bet, before the day's done."

Their reception by the self-exiled little English lord was very cordial as to words, and as he introduced them to a few of the French sportsmen, he contrived to whisper in the Englishmen's ears that they, the curiously got-up riders, were not fellows to be despised.

"They are counts and marquises, every man jack of them," he said; "old Carlist families. Blue blood, don't you know? The mayor of the commune wouldn't have allowed of this boar-battue but for them. The peasants are always getting up a concurrence to shoot down the boars on the plea that they are ravaging the crops, but it's the *noblesse* really who set it going."

After this explanation, the entire party, amounting to about forty gentlemen, made their way to the woods, whence from that moment there proceeded a mighty sound of shouting, and of the fanfares of *cors de chasse*. For hours at a stretch were they at it, hoping at every moment to hear from amongst the brushwood

covert the rush of their expected prey, but, *ay, di mi!* the brute, of whom Shakespeare wrote that

" On his bow-back he hath a battle-set
Of bristly pikes that ever threat his foes,"

did not on that occasion condescend to put in an appearance, the only victim to the sportsmen's "bows and spears" being a harmless squirrel which Tom Grimshaw, with the purpose of unloading his gun, took aim at, and incontinently, as a trophy of the day's sport, bagged. On the following morning our riflemen, accompanied by their quondam brother-officer, set off—"a day's journey through the wilderness"—to Quimperlé. Their talk on the way ran chiefly on equine subjects, and on their arrival, the first object of interest, to Lord de Beevor especially, was the Lady Alicia, a weedy thoroughbred mare, bred by its owner, and which was safe to win the 1,000 francs prize at the forthcoming Quimperlé steeplechase.

The great day—great, that is to say, for the poor Armoricain, in whose eyes the sum of forty pounds is a synonym for wealth—dawned bright and clear. The time fixed for the all-important event was 2 p.m., and previous to that hour the young English officers were enabled to form an opinion, not alone of the nags which had entered for the race, but of the jockeys by whom they were to be ridden. The former, five in number, were heavy, country-bred stallions, whilst their riders were stalwart Breton peasants clad in the costume of the department, to wit, an embroidered velveteen jacket and loose *bragues, id est*, puffed out breeches. Their long hair fell over their shoulders; on their heads were broad-brimmed felt hats, whilst their feet were shod with sabots, *anglicé*, wooden shoes. The contrast between these stolid countrymen and Lord de Beevor, as the latter, faultlessly got up in his racing colours—green and purple—stood with his friends near the weighing-stand, was so strongly marked that Fred Talmash was seized with an involuntary impulse to say:

"Well, by Jove! this is rot, and no mistake. What a farce this weighing is, and what chance have these poor devils against your English thoroughbred?"

"None whatever," was "Bill's" cool reply; "but they, as well as their backers, hold a different opinion. Obstinacy and conceit are such marked features in the Breton character that half these fellows with handles to their names are convinced that their breed of horses is the best in the world. The course is a long one, and they are ready to lay long odds against Lady Alicia's staying powers. They are arrant fools about horseflesh, and you can run them in for a good pile of naps, if you take my advice."

"Thank you," rejoined Fred drily, "but it doesn't exactly suit my look to bet on a certainty."

A shrug of the shoulders was Lord de Beevor's only answer

to this remark, and then, time being up, the bell for saddling was rung, and all was excitement and hurry. It is needless to describe a race the result of which could not, in the opinion of a single sensible looker-on, have been for a moment doubtful. After it was over and whilst the successful winner of the 1,000 francs prize was standing in his bravery of shining satin by the side of the open carriage from which his two compatriots had witnessed the race, an event worthy of notice occurred. The English consul, a liberal, kindly specimen of his countrymen, feeling, as did many of those who had been spectators of the race, for the discomfited aborigines, resolved on getting up by subscription a small sum to be run for as a "consolation stake" by the peasantry alone. Amongst the first of those to whom he held out the hat was the successful rider of Lady Alicia. From his comparative abundance, the good-natured consul doubtless expected substantial aid; his disgust and annoyance may therefore be better imagined than described when his noble countryman flatly refused to contribute a farthing to the fund!

"What an infernal cad!" whispered Grimshaw to his companion when "Bill" had sauntered for the moment out of hearing, and forthwith the two young soldiers did for the honour of their country and their corps contrive, not particularly flush of cash though they were, to "fork out" each man his napoleon as a quota to the "consolation stakes." "Upon my soul, if I had had a notion of his being such a thundering screw I'd have seen him at the devil before I'd have come within a hundred miles of his confounded *shatoe*."

"We had better have taken old Fancourt's advice and stopped in barracks," said Talmash. "Little cad! What must the people of the country think of an English lord after this! I vote we cut away home again, for I, for one, have had pretty nearly enough of the Saumon cookery, and the grub here isn't much better."

Against this proposal Tom Grimshaw had nothing to urge, so that after taking a somewhat chilling farewell of the ex-rifleman, the two young fellows, whose sense of honour was as yet keen and unsullied, made tracks for England.

Very shortly after this event, the Marquis of McCultramore, after an innings of nearly ninety years, joined the majority, and Bill de Beever reigned in his stead. The new peer was, as regarded the fashionable London world, what may be called a "dark horse." He had never gone in, as the saying is, for ladies' society, and being, as I have already said, the reverse of good to look at, it so chanced that when some eight months after his grandfather's death he found himself for the first time domiciled for awhile in London, he had never been at a ball in his life. But things were altered now. A young bachelor-marquis possessed of a rental of £80,000 per annum and two of the finest "places" in England is of

necessity a marked man. "*Noblesse oblige*," and therefore it came about that one of the new marquises' noble cousins induced with some difficulty the shy little man to assist, at the said cousin's invitation alone, at a ball given by Almeria, Countess of Hauteville. Now this same dowager countess being one of the most insolent and overbearing of London fine ladies, Lord John Rivers should have been better advised than to give his cousin the *entrée* of her ladyship's mansion without previously preparing her for the extremely unattractive appearance of her unexpected guest. The consequences of this omission soon became apparent. Lady Hauteville's eagle eye having fixed its gaze on a young man of plebeian appearance, whose plain features were not rendered more attractive by the spectacles which shortness of sight compelled him to wear, lost not a moment in bringing the intruder, as she at once decided him to be, to book.

"Pray," she asked, with a hauteur of voice and manner which was intended to strike dumb with consternation the "vulgar little fellow" she was condescending to address, "have you received an invitation from me to this ball?"

Now the quondam Bill de Beevor was not only no fool, but he had very lofty ideas concerning his own exalted position. The comic side of the situation was, moreover, not lost upon him, and he therefore abstained at that moment from making known his style and quality, contenting himself with the mere confession that he was an uninvited guest.

Upon hearing this cool admission of his guilt, the wrath of the irate dowager knew no bounds.

"Insolent fellow!" she exclaimed. "Leave my house this moment or I shall send for the police to expel you from the rooms!"

"No occasion, ma'am, I'm off," said the "fellow," who, after making his best bow, and bad, it must be owned, was that best, obeyed, with much laughter in his sleeve, the great lady's behest.

I am sadly afraid that the countess, when she, soon after the marquise's expulsion, discovered her mistake, gave the lie for the moment to the motto that *bon sang ne ment pas*, and indulged in language unbecoming a peeress and a gentlewoman. There was something, seeing that she possessed three plain daughters on the look out for eligible husbands, to be said in her ladyship's excuse, and also for the tone of abject humility in which her after apologies to Lord McCultramore were couched. She even entreated him to forget the past, and favour her with his company on the following day to dinner, which invitation was, however, promptly but civilly declined.

There was, however, consolation in store for the *grande dame*, whose zeal had so unfortunately outrun her discretion; for on the week following that of her deeply-regretted act, a paragraph in the *Morning Post* announced the fact that the "Most Noble the

Marquis of McCultramore had that morning led to the hymeneal altar, Jemima, fourth daughter of Josiah Wilkinson, Esquire, of Dale View House, Clapham."

"A young man of low tastes, evidently, as well as atrociously vulgar-looking," commented the dowager, when it afterwards transpired that "Bill" had been during four years faithful to his Jemima; his determination to "stick" to that young lady having caused the breach between himself and his grandfather which only death had healed.

So that there was some good in the little lord after all!

"Were man
But constant, he would be perfect,"

wrote Shakespeare; but whether Lord McCultramore's constancy to the fair Jemima resulted from the memory of her charms, or from the early military training which he had received, matters little; it is sufficient to know that although on the Morlaix race-course he had shown himself to be a "cad," he did not forget, when performing the most important act of a lifetime, to act up to the too-often-neglected motto that

NOBLESSE OBLIGE.

ON BOARD R. Y. S. "SANTA MARIA."

THE START FOR THE JUBILEE YACHT RACE.

JUNE 14TH, 1887.

THE development of yachting has been as vigorous as other things in this happy Victorian reign, and what more natural than to have some important "sea mark"—for we cannot call it a land mark—to celebrate the occasion of fifty years' prosperous and happy reign. The course was to be round the United Kingdom, for a Jubilee Cup, value one thousand guineas; the start from off Southend pier at the hour of noon, Tuesday, June 14th. Various advertisements invited enthusiasts to take passage in the "Norham Castle" (Donald Currie Cape Liner), in the "Athenian," and the General Steam Navigation Company's "Eagle." Of these we thought seriously, when a kindly note arrived with an invitation to luncheon on board R.Y.S. "Santa Maria"—special train from Charing Cross to Port Victoria, then on board and steam out to see the start. How one enjoys breakfast on such a morning—and such a bright morning—everything ready before sitting down to the matutinal comforter—race-glasses ready, cigar case, matches, and invitation note as a pass. A special train imparts always a kind of festive atmosphere to a station, even to Charing Cross. It was not a time of waterproofs and sou'-westers, but sunshades, yacht badges, and dust-coats even. Starting to the minute we soon flew down to Greenhithe, with the "Chichester" and "Arethusa" training ships peacefully carrying on their good work. Then in the distance we saw Purfleet, with the "Goliath" training ship and the Siamese hospital ships. By this time Father Thames had assumed an air of gaiety, bunting was abundant, and the steamers were hurrying down. As a matter of course, although everything augured well, there was something which might improve the occasion—that was an all-important item. "There might be a little more wind," would not be a grumbling remark, for a summer morning haze surrounded us, the steamer's smoke went straight up and lay in strata, yacht sails reflected, and the very cattle in the marshes were in repose. Port Victoria was duly ratched; the kind owner and owneress, Mr. and Mrs. Rolls, of the Hendre, welcomed us on board the "Santa Maria," R.Y.S. We soon cast off and steamed for the starting point—still oil calm. The "Pandora," Mr. W. H. Smith's yacht, laid ahead of us, and a racer was towed by. Sheerness looked business-like; Queenborough, with its Elizabethan tradition of the Mayor's tattered hose and Flushing steamer of the present day, was grey and in shadow, when a salute boomed from the flag-ship, H.M.S. "Duncan," and we knew the Prince of Wales had arrived. There is always something grand about the smoke curling over the water. Then another flash, and more smoke—it takes one back

to the fighting walls of Old England, and the fighting "Temeraire," and James' "Naval History." There was not much time to spare, having to steam down to the Nore light-ship to get round the Spit, which runs so far out. Across it we could make out the racers preparing for a flying start, with about ninety yachts and screw steamers, the huge grey "Norham Castle," the "Athenian," and many more vessels. Every class of boat was there, from the shrimping bawleys to the stately "Czarina," of which the owner, Mr. Albert Brassey, may be justly proud, and the Royal Thames Yacht Club, too, for she was flying the blue ensign in their honour, not of one simple bunting, but of shining silk. So many vessels under weigh at once and so thick, the marvel was there were no collisions—the more credit to the amateurs at the helm, and their name was legion. The starting line was between the "Norham Castle" and the end of Southend pier. One gun only was fired, and they were started by the Commodore of the Royal Thames, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, and away they went. The Royal party went on board Lord Alfred Paget's steam yacht "Violet," and steamed towards the Mouse. At this time we had an interesting incident on board. The Prince's schooner "Aline" had Lord Suffield on board, and we had on board his sea gear and his valet, this wise. At Charing Cross the valet, finding himself already "at sea," for he could not get down in time, asked if he might be allowed to go down in the special. "Certainly," said the kindly owner, Mr. Rolls, "and put you on board, if possible." To make the story short, after the "Aline" had started in the race the "Santa Maria," knowing nothing else could be done, ran under her lee, very smartly lowered her dingey, and hanging on to the main chains, handed in the gear. Lord Suffield was comforted; he smole a smile and forgave the tardy valet, and held on his course with our best wishes. Soon after the "Sleuthhound," 40-tonner, on port tack, crossed the bow of the "Aline" on the starboard; she went about, and soon two hands were seen flying the Protest blue ensign reversed in the lee forerigging. Amongst the racers was one craft of much individuality. To begin with, she was grey, some of the invisible grey of many torpedo boats. She was a ketch, a ketch being a yawl with the mizenmast farther forward and carrying a mizen gaff-topsail when requisite; she looked very workmanlike, in fact so much as to recall associations of the Dogger Bank. By this time we were bound for the Mouse light, and passed a number of vessels. One green, with the letters "wreck," three lower mast heads, just out of the water, and small craft round, showed the catastrophe that had occurred, and showed us that even at the Nore it is not all plain sailing, and that the dangers of the sea may overtake us any time. One of the great charms of a day like this is the revival of old associations. For this the Royal Thames Yacht Club offers great

scope. The elders relate old yarns of early days, which the younger ones hand down to those who come after. The merits of the yachts are gradually discussed until we get so far back as the yacht matches in the Thames, when the "Lady Louisa" and other 12-tonners started from Greenwich, and the sight of the "Violet," Lord Alfred Paget's, a name especially associated with the "Mystery," 25 tons, and the "Secret," "Blue Belle," "Volante," and the "Belvedere," and an 18-tonner, built and steered by "Charlie Stokes." In those days Lord Alfred's father, the Marquis of Anglesey, used to come in his grand craft "The Pearl," 120-ton cutter, and run alongside the club steamer and take off his glazed hat as we cheered him again and again. The history of the "Pearl" is curious and interesting. The Marquis of Anglesey prided himself in having the fleetest of the fleet, but one day in a hard breeze in the mouth of the Thames a smart and small craft passed him. For months he inquired and tried to discover the mysterious stranger, but of no avail. At last, one day, the long-wished-for answer came. "Who was it? why it must be old Santy, the smuggler, out of Colne River." The Marquis went up the Colne River and found old Santy in prison for smuggling. The next thing was to get him out, but Santy could neither read nor write, and he could not get any one to trust him for timber. That difficulty was soon overcome, and he built the "Pearl." In the Castle of the Royal Yacht Squadron, West Cowes, the "Pearl" may be seen in company with the "Falcon" and other celebrities in the club picture, and well she looks. Other vessels were built; the Wyvenhoe men took up yachting vigorously and well, and in the present day the old yacht is known in Wyvenhoe as "The Mother," and affectionately her children speak of her.

What a change in yachting now! Instead of two or three fellow-salts, a party of ninety or more, youth, beauty, and intellect of various growths, going where they list, and punctually returning to catch a special back to dine in town. For this we are indebted to the ladies, and the sweet persuasive influence of the wives of owners, who, when they take friends out, can now tell pretty nearly when they can bring them back. What a contrast to a ladies' party, becalmed mid-channel for forty-eight hours even, with a bachelor owner.

On our return to Port Victoria we found H.M.S. "Mohawk," new steel torpedo cruiser, had arrived, bristling with torpedo shoots, and guns as well, and as she lay by the noble old "Duncan" flag, we could but think what splinters she would blow her into if her destructive power were put forth.

We were all sorry as our delightful visit closed; we hoped the "best yacht" would win in the long course of the Jubilee Race, and that our host and hostess would enjoy for many years the delights and comfort of the "Santa Maria."

THE DUKE OF MELTON:

A STORY IN TWO PARTS.

By LADY VIRGINIA SANDARS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEIRESS OF HAREDALE," ETC.

PART II.

WHEN Oliver entered the remarkably comfortable room prepared for his reception, he flung himself into the nearest chair with a groan, exclaiming, "I'm a lost man; they are ten times more beautiful than I anticipated, and as to that Hyacinth, she is simply adorable."

Then, having a due appreciation of his own external advantages, he proceeded with considerable male coquetry to begin his toilet. Long ere it was completed Selmar entered the room, and glancing round, observed dryly:

"I see you have the state apartment. In mine there is hardly a whole piece of furniture. And as to the bed, so rickety is its appearance I have serious doubts of my night's repose."

"Ah! ah! you begin to find there are some advantages in dukedom. So do I now," nonchalantly replied Oliver as he carefully tied his neat white cravat.

"What a fop you are!" good-humouredly replied Selmar. "But I tell you one thing upon which I am determined, to dismiss this valet you engaged. After ringing for him in vain, a housemaid appeared, saying, 'The duke's gentleman was at his tea and could not be disturbed.' And when the impertinent rascal did at last obey my summons, he coolly informed me he was not engaged to wait upon the duke's friends."

"Capital," cried Oliver with a roaring laugh. "But pardon me, Curling Tongs suits me to perfection. Couldn't think of parting with him."

Giving his long silky moustache a final twirl, he rose from his chair, calling out impudently as he left the room, "Blow out the candles, there's a good fellow, and let us proceed to join the ladies."

"The candles be hanged," testily replied Selmar; "and remember, I expect you to uphold the dignity of the position in which you temporarily stand. No tripping into flirtation, Mr. Oliver, to which you seem already inclined."

"Tripping! why, I have been discretion itself," replied Oliver innocently. "But, indeed," he added with fervour, "these girls are so superhumanly beautiful, they might cause St. Anthony himself to trip."

In the drawing-room the ladies were already assembled.

They had exchanged their tea-gowns for *demi toilettes* of ravishing design. Made by themselves, there is no doubt.

"What admirable poor men's wives they would make," thought Oliver, who had an inkling how pecuniary matters stood at the Dower House. The sisters, in their gay artistic costumes, might fitly be compared to splendid hot-house orchids, while Kate in her simple white gown represented the modest snowdrop. If the duke had been charmed with her before, he was doubly so when, coming timidly forward, she presented him with a late rosebud, saying, "Tiger and I have picked this for you in token of our gratitude."

The truth was, Kate, indignant at finding that a splendid button-hole had been prepared for the duke, while his friend had been neglected, was determined to make amends for such neglect.

This evening, and many that followed, passed most agreeably for all concerned. The invitation for a week was extended to a fortnight, then to three weeks. The gentlemen were only too willing to stay on; and from the difficulty Lady Lodore appeared to find in collecting a suitable establishment for the Abbey, a duty she had volunteered to undertake, it really seemed, as Oliver observed, as though there were no respectable servants left in England.

It must not be supposed that during these halcyon weeks the Misses Parkhurst wholly turned over their former friends, Major Banger and Captain Smithers; they were far too keen-witted and also kind-hearted. And notwithstanding the viscountess's almost tearful remonstrances, insisted on both being asked to meet the duke at dinner, Hyacinth saying decisively, "Depend upon it, mamma, the duke has heard all sorts of ill-natured reports respecting our flirtations with these gentlemen. We will prove their exaggerated falseness."

And most effectually did wily Hyacinth carry out her intentions. Boldly she asked the unfortunate Captain Smithers, who sat next her at dinner, in a loud clear voice, to repeat his softest, tenderest whispers, and having thereby driven that unfortunate officer to the verge of insanity, she put a climax to his misery by presenting her former admirer, as he was leaving, with the famous crimson stockings, while she said blandly, in the hearing of all present and to the infinite amusement of Oliver:

"I trust, Captain Smithers, they will keep you nice and warm during the winter, serving at the same time to keep the donor in remembrance."

"Heartless flirt!" exclaimed the outraged captain; "I could have thrown the beastly things into that grinning duke's face," he added savagely, as he and the jovial major drove away from the scene of their former triumphs back to barracks.

"Ah, Smithers, my boy, you haven't the ghost of a chance

against a duke, and one so handsome to boot," responded Banger, laughing. "Don't be a dog in the manger. You have said a hundred times you were too poor to marry. Don't stand in the lovely Hyacinth's path to a ducal coronet. By Jove! she looked every inch a duchess to-night," exclaimed the major enthusiastically.

"A coquette—a woman without a heart or soul!" furiously responded Smithers; "never shall she mount a horse of mine again."

When the party finally broke up at the Dower House, all had become as well acquainted as if they had known each other for years, and parted with the full intention of meeting as often as possible, for which the hunting season just commencing gave ample opportunities, as all the Misses Parkhurst were good and fearless riders.

At the departure of their guests, none grieved more than Kate, and in the privacy of her own little room she shed many tears.

All unconscious as was her unsophisticated heart of the fact, she had been for some time completely absorbed in the delirious excitement of a first flirtation, ending with her in a much deeper feeling. Not that the duke had at first the slightest idea of making love to Kate, who, only seventeen, appeared to him almost a child.

But rather piqued at finding himself entirely neglected by the stately beauties, he not unnaturally turned to Kate for companionship, finding in her society such sweet amends for the neglect of others that he wholly failed to keep a Cerberus watch on Oliver's movements, leaving that gentleman to walk and flirt with the Misses Parkhurst to the fullest extent his inflammable heart prompted, while he himself roamed with innocent Kate through the fast autumnning woods, instructing her in charmed words with the habits of birds and animals—of which her Indian life had left her unacquainted—or repeating pastoral poetry until he fairly bewitched the young girl's heart from her own keeping into his. In teaching Kate natural history, he had taught her something deeper.

The duke might, however, have remained in complete ignorance, not only of his conquest, but also of the serious impression Kate had made on his own heart, had not both facts been most pleasantly revealed to him on the morning of his departure.

Gazing from his bedroom window and pondering on the vanity of things in general, his eyes were suddenly attracted to Kate, sitting in the garden under a tree, and evidently holding confidential conversation with Tiger, who had his ears cocked at attention, and was looking up at his pretty mistress with deep sagacity.

After watching for a short time this pretty picture, it suddenly struck him that in no way could he spend his time more agreeably until breakfast than by making a third in the little group.

As he came up to where Kate sat, his footfall fell so noiselessly on the grass that she remained unaware of his approach, and he overheard her say plaintively, as he stood a moment behind her:

"Ah, Tiger! if nobody else cares, we are sorry—terribly sorry—our friend is leaving us, though he is not a duke."

"Bow-wow," joyously responded Tiger to this melancholy appeal, while the duke came forward, saying with a smile:

"Good morning, Miss Morden. I am glad you do not value your friends according to the height of the pedestal on which they stand. But may I have the supreme happiness of thinking I am the friend whose departure you and Tiger regret?"

Kate's face was suffused with blushing confusion as the duke sat down beside her. She was very fair to behold—the fairest of all God's beautiful creatures—a lovely innocent girl in the first dawn of womanhood. And so thought the duke as he gazed at her downcast eyes and blushing countenance. As she did not speak, he continued:

"So you don't care about dukes? How wonderful! I thought most young ladies regarded them with admiration and awe."

"There are exceptions to all rules," replied Kate, looking up for the first time. "Besides, the duke paid *me* no attention," she added simply, "while you have been very kind to me."

"Who would not be kind to you?" he replied with a beaming smile. "But would you not like to be a duchess, Miss Morden?"

"I should be afraid," she replied solemnly. "Moreover a duchess should be tall and stately, like—like dear Hyacinth. Don't you think so?" She looked up at him timidly, but with keen, anxious inquiry, wholly unnoticed by the duke, who was far too much engrossed with his own feelings to be concerned about the love-making of others. He was only thinking how enchanting was this girl beside him, with her simple, unsophisticated words and modest manner; and how charming she looked with the changing colour in her cheek and with her abundant brown hair, reflecting golden tints beneath the sun shining on her uncovered head.

"I am so glad you don't care about dukes, Miss Morden," he answered dreamily, "for it holds out a chance that more ordinary mortals may still breathe, even hope, in the presence of girlish youth and beauty. And now," he looked earnestly at Kate's blushing face, "will you repeat again words I know were only meant for Tiger's ears—that you are sorry for my departure?"

For a moment she hesitated, and then answered almost inaudibly, without looking up, "I am indeed very sorry."

"Then if my departure is unmourned by all others, I care not," he exclaimed.

Here a bell, loudly rung at the open window by Daphne, recalled the duke and Kate to the sublunary fact that breakfast was proceeding, and in delicious silence they obeyed its summons.

Happy, happy Kate! Still happier duke, who had found the Eldorado of his wishes!

No sooner were the guests departed than, assembled in Iris's room, the girls began a spirited discussion of their merits.

Too well-bred to have entirely ignored the duke's friend, they had been to him coldly courteous, though, indeed, under ordinary circumstances his attractions were quite sufficient to have offered an inducement for temporary flirtation. But until assured which was the favoured one, none of the three dared endanger their chance of becoming a duchess by any profitless coquetry with the duke's friend, and now wasted but few words on his qualifications, good or bad, all their thoughts and conversation being devoted to the supposed duke's merits and personal attractions. Hyacinth was, however, unusually silent, while Daphne was the principal speaker. Evidently her hopes ran high. But they were unpleasantly crushed by Iris oracularly saying:

"Well, girls, I consider myself quite out of the running—in fact, scratched, and I strongly advise you to withdraw also, Daphne. We must both use all our influence to help darling Hyacinth; for though charming to us all, I observed that when talking to *us*, the duke's eyes were still ever fixed upon *her*. And he said good-bye to her last."

Daphne's countenance fell as she replied, "I really don't think my chance is a bad one. But still you have had so much experience in these matters, Iris, that I am ready to withdraw if you are confident in your judgment. But in this case it is a pity I so consistently snubbed Major Banger, and, indeed, that we all should have paid so little attention to Major Selmar."

"He seemed to console himself very well for our neglect," drily observed Hyacinth.

"He only took up with Kate *faute de mieux*," rather spitefully responded Daphne. "I must congratulate you, Kate, on the very hopeful manner in which you have begun the guerilla warfare of flirtation. But, my dear, I gathered from the duke that his friend hasn't a rap! So beware."

"Oh! how worldly you are, Daphne," cried Kate indignantly, her face crimson with excitement, but far too secure in her newborn happiness to resent her cousin's ill-natured speech. "If ever I do marry," she continued, "I should prefer marrying a poor man, for then the truth of my affection could never be doubted."

"Transcendently romantic rubbish, my dear. When you have manufactured your own wardrobe as long as I have, and packed as many trunks, you will become slightly more prosaic. It is better to be born a dairymaid than in a station you can't adequately uphold," said Daphne, leaving the room in a decidedly crestfallen spirit.

At the Abbey Oliver and the duke sat opposite each other in the smoking-room. Oliver was moody and taciturn, the duke hilarious and talkative.

"Well, Oliver," he observed, "we have had a charming visit, and on the whole I remain satisfied with your conduct, though I am not *quite* sure that your farewell to Miss Hyacinth was not a *little* too tender. The length of time you held her hand at parting might lead to hopes that can have no fruition."

"Hang these footstools, they are in every one's way," petulantly exclaimed Oliver, kicking the offending article from one end of the room to the other, and adding ironically, "I should have thought you were too much occupied with your own parting to pay any attention to mine."

The duke slightly coloured, but passing over this latter remark, continued, "Remember I am acquainted with all your past flirtations."

"I have done with all that," replied Oliver sullenly.

"When Gladstone gives up speechifying I shall believe you have given up flirtation, my good friend. In the meanwhile, don't forget that if Miss Hyacinth displays a flattering preference for your society she is fully convinced you have a ducal coronet to lay at her feet."

"But whatever happens I still remain a man, I suppose?" angrily said Oliver.

"Certainly, and a very handsome and impressionable one; so much so that with your borrowed plumes, superadded to your natural advantages, I have no chance. I am too heavily handicapped with an Adonis as well as a duke for my rival."

"What on earth do you mean, Selmar? Have I ever come between you and Miss Morden?"

"Miss Morden!" exclaimed the duke in well-acted surprise. "Why, I am old enough to be her father."

"Your manner was certainly very paternal," replied Oliver sarcastically. "Why, Miss Morden is a perfect Hebe. I should be in love with her myself if I did not adore that glorious Hyacinth."

"I should feel deeply distressed by such an assertion if I believed it," said the duke seriously. "But pooh! you have never in your whole life been in love with any one but yourself. And even if you are now undergoing the pangs of a true passion, which I wholly doubt, believe me that I desire to spare you future mortification when I say I have gauged the Misses Parkhursts' characters to their utmost depth. They are pretrifactions of worldliness. I don't wish to be uncomplimentary, Oliver, but mark my words, when the fair Hyacinth learns your true name her feelings towards you will undergo a cooling process by no means flattering to your vanity."

"I was an ass ever to have placed myself in this idiotic position. And you wrong her I am sure. But even supposing the ambition of being a duchess has attractions for her, would not every girl be the same?" generously replied Oliver.

"Well, if you are secure of your conquest, you can prove its

truth later on. In the meanwhile compromise neither yourself nor me, I beg."

"If I do, whose the fault?"

"Mine, I allow, and therefore I warn you. Except inasmuch as we have been their guests and owe them consideration, the Misses Parkhurst are nothing to me. I love Kate Morden."

"I knew it—I knew it! Let me congratulate you, my dear fellow. She adores you," exclaimed Oliver joyously. "And now I am once more my own jolly self, and only hope your confounded strawberry leaves won't irritate you as they have done me."

"Not quite so fast if you please; I do not wish to declare myself too hurriedly. Miss Morden is young yet to know her own mind."

"Then, for my sake, teach it her quickly. But that she loves you, I could swear."

"My vanity is not so great as to be secure of this; therefore, dear friend, bear a little longer with our mutual disguise."

"Have I any alternative?" said Oliver ruefully, taking up his candle. "Good-night, dream of Kate, for I am convinced she is dreaming of you."

Arrived in his own room he exclaimed, "I can never hold out, I know I can't. When she looks at me with that beseeching glance I feel desperate." For the first time in his life Oliver was truly in love.

Had the two men at this point prudently stopped to consider their present actions, they might have avoided much future discomfort. But the ravishing thought that he could secure Kate's affections, while she still remained ignorant of the brilliant future awaiting her, caused the duke to become utterly indifferent to every other consideration. While Oliver, feeling that to his friend he owed his life, deemed it almost ungrateful to put forward his own feelings. And it is fair to say, the duke had not the faintest idea how matters really stood between Hyacinth and Oliver, or to what extent the latter had carried his flirtation.

Soon after the departure of the two men from the Dower House Iris expressed her intention of leaving also. "We are too many women in the house, now that Kate is one of us," she said good-humouredly.

"Where are you going, dear?" asked Hyacinth rather absently.

"To spend some weeks with old Lady Bankwell. You see, she is determined one of us should marry her son. And I am determined to be that one," said Iris laughing.

"Oh, Iris darling! you will never be able to stand his tiresome way of making love. Even when he was making up to me, I could never smother my yawns," said Hyacinth with the deepest gravity.

"My pet," said Iris smiling, "you must not speak disrespectfully of your future brother-in-law. Besides, you are spoilt by

more seductive wooing. Sir Richard is an honourable, charitable man. And if anything were to happen to poor mamma you know we are left nearly penniless. We are not fit to be governesses, and what else could we be?" sadly ended the elder sister.

Hyacinth sighed as she answered, "But it seems dreary for you to have so unromantic an ending to your life, dear Iris."

"I played out my romance long ago, Hyacinth," said her sister quickly. "It ended badly; but I am determined yours shall not. The duke adores you, child, or I know nought of what a man's eyes can tell. But why do you cry, darling?"

"Because your words rejoice me. For I love him, Iris—love him with my whole heart. Of course I like the idea of being a duchess, but if he were poor Smithers, I should love him equally."

"But this is not a transformation scene, Hyacinth, and you shall not only be a duchess, but also marry the man you love, and in your double happiness I shall find amends for the blank in my life," said Iris, kissing her sister fondly.

"What a good sister you are, Iris! I wish you would not throw yourself away on that prosy Sir——"

"Hush, hush!" responded Iris, placing her hand over her sister's mouth.

When next they met, Hyacinth, radiant with love and hope, greeted Oliver with a bewitching shyness that made her doubly irresistible. To repel temptation in her presence was impossible, and intense was Hyacinth's mortification when, after a few unmeaning words, he abruptly left her side. But Oliver was far too deeply in love to be always on his guard, or to be ever flying from the seduction of Hyacinth's society as though he were possessed. Thus one moment he blew hot, the next cold.

In vain he implored the duke to release him from his rash promise by proposing for Kate; the duke could not make up his mind to spoil the romance of his present position. His love had plunged him into a sea of selfishness, and he was jealous even at the thought of Kate's pure affection being diverted from himself by girlish musings on his worldly advantages.

At last finding his position untenable, Oliver determined to tear himself away entirely from Hyacinth's vicinity. She, indignant at his behaviour, had become proudly cold, and deemed herself prepared for the blow, when one evening after dinner Oliver, who was leaving the Dower House early the next morning, followed her into the hall to say good-night. With a beating heart she took the candle with which he presented her, almost dropping it as he said in an agitated voice:

"This is not only good-night, but good-bye, Miss Hyacinth, for I grieve to say I am forced by circumstances over which I have no control to go——" Oliver here stopped; he had not the remotest idea where he was going, and repeated, "to go—to go——"

"To Jericho!" said Hyacinth lightly, though she turned cold,

and her heart seemed suddenly to stand still. But she was determined this false man should see no trace of her sorrow. "Well, duke, this world is not very large, so after all we may meet again. *Au revoir.*" So saying she rushed upstairs, turning back on the landing and calling out with a gay little laugh as she kissed her hand to him, "Good-night, duke, and *bon voyage* to—to Jericho." But arrived in her own room, she locked herself in and wept as though her heart would break, murmuring between her sobs:

"I love—oh! how I love him, while he has only flirted and amused himself as I have done with others. Oh! I am cruelly punished. He has heard of my follies and deems me unworthy to be his wife."

Downstairs Oliver fumed and raged up and down the little hall, exclaiming fiercely:

"Cold, heartless flirt, woman without a particle of true feeling! She thinks she has lost her chance of being a duchess, and wishes to show how little she cares for the man. She revenges every injury I have done her sex, that is if they have hearts to be injured."

But though Hyacinth had sobbed herself to sleep, she was a girl of spirit, and in the morning awoke determined still further to show this perfidious duke she did not care a pin for him.

With fresh courage she donned her blue riding habit and accompanied Daphne to the opening meet of the —shire hounds, where she had overheard Oliver express his determination of going.

When he appeared in the field his lover's eye quickly discerned Hyacinth; but, distraction! gay, smiling, and apparently deep in flirtation with Smithers. It had only required a bright smile, a few soft words, to draw this infatuated captain once more to her side. And as she now chatted joyously to him, bowing carelessly to Oliver at the same time, the latter mentally vowed to pound Smithers into the smallest possible atoms on the minutest provocation and on the first opportunity presenting itself. But while he was brooding over this murderous intention the hounds gave cry, and the whole field were immediately in motion, looking in the distance like animated poppies.

Away flew Hyacinth, closely followed by her two adorers, with her golden hair scattering light around her. The excitement of a rattling run was upon the beautiful girl as well as that of love and hope renewed, for she had noted the furious scowl on Oliver's countenance. He was jealous! Why had she never tried this powerful weapon before?

A bold and fearless rider, no man could say they had ever lost a run in Hyacinth's society. She required no gates opened, no lead across hedge or ditch. On this special day she was in a state of desperation. In vain, alarmed at her reckless daring, Smithers cautioned prudence. She only laughed, turning her face to see if Oliver was near. Splendidly mounted on one

of the duke's best hunters, he was not only near, but soon had left Smithers far behind. Still Hyacinth kept the lead. By-and-by they were close to a wide running stream, too broad to jump, but which Hyacinth had often swam her horse across. Boldly gathering up her skirt, she prepared to do so now, forgetful of late tremendous rains and unobservant of the angry turbid appearance of the water.

"Hold! hold!" shouted Oliver in terrible alarm. "I hear the river is dangerous."

Unheeded were his words. Hyacinth had often crossed it before—had not heard of the danger—disregarded it now, and in she plunged, calling back audaciously:

"There is no occasion for you to follow if you are afraid!"

Another moment and horse and rider were battling fiercely for dear life. Alarmed at the force of the current, the terrified horse made no effort to swim, allowing himself to drift with the stream. Quickly Hyacinth recognized her peril. But though she had lost all command of her horse, presence of mind did not desert the brave girl. Weighed down by the weight of her saturated habit, she yet managed to extricate her foot from the stirrup and slipped from her saddle, murmuring softly as the cold waters closed over her:

"He will save me, I am sure."

And she was right. Already having sprung from his horse, Oliver was wading and swimming to his love's rescue. But not without considerable difficulty was he enabled to drag her to the bank, for Hyacinth's splendid figure was not that of a sylph.

When ultimately he laid his beauteous burden on the grass, she was to all appearance insensible. In vain he chafed her cold hands, whispering words of impassioned adoration. Her eyes remained closed, affording him ample opportunity of admiring the contrast of sweeping black lashes resting on a cheek of alabaster.

But wily Hyacinth was not quite so insensible as she appeared. In an ecstasy of joy she was drinking in words she had so longed to hear. But it needed her to be in the peril of death to call them forth, and therefore this laggard lover's fears must be prolonged.

But when, finding tender words unavailing, her rescuer proceeded to kiss first her cold cheek and then her lips, a slight tremulous motion passed over the young girl's frame, while the ruby blood rushed in a torrent to her face. Gently the blue eyes opened, fixing themselves on Oliver's face, as the owner in a faint voice asked the orthodox question of all ladies recovering from a state of insensibility:

"Where am I?"

"In the arms of him who adores you, beloved Hyacinth!" exclaimed Oliver rapturously.

A smile of intense happiness passed over the girl's face, and then without a word, from the combined effects of joy, cold, and fright, she really fainted dead away.

And now Hyacinth's popularity was exemplified, for half the field turned back to her aid, and a carriage being procured, she was quickly conveyed home.

But for the state of excitement in which her icy plunge found her, Hyacinth's accident might have been followed by no bad effects. As it was, before nightfall she was in high fever, and slightly wandering. A telegram quickly brought Iris to her side as the tenderest of nurses.

In the meanwhile the distracted Oliver had confided to the duke how in a moment of terrible anxiety his secret had escaped him. The duke, who was now the happiest of men as Kate's accepted lover, having proposed that morning, hardly seemed to take in the gravity of the position until Oliver said angrily:

"Upon my word, Selmar, I believe you think of nobody but yourself. And I refuse to carry on this farce any longer. Do you understand?"

"It is no longer necessary," replied the duke; "nor should I have continued it had I believed you to be truly in love. But it is my fault you have got into this scrape. And I begin to see the extent of our error when it is too late."

"Yes, Selmar," groaned Oliver, "out of affection for you I have behaved like a scoundrel. Though she uttered no response to my words of adoration, her eloquent eyes spoke a fond avowal of love returned. When she knows the truth she will scorn me as I deserve. But I may even be denied the privilege of her scorn, for she may die. If so, I am her murderer. For I saw she recklessly courted death as she plunged into the surging waters. Oh! I think I will shoot myself," concluded Oliver, pacing up and down in desperation and striking his forehead violently with his clenched hand.

"Pooh! pooh! my dear fellow, don't be melodramatic. This is not a tragedy we are enacting, only the last act of a genteel little comedy. Miss Hyacinth has a splendid constitution, and will be none the worse for her wetting. She owes her life to you; this alone must ensure your forgiveness. In the meanwhile we must throw ourselves on the mercy of the court, confessing our errors to Lady Lod——"

"Not Lady Lodore!" shouted Oliver. "She knows I have declared my love, and has already embraced me effusively as her son-in-law and the preserver of her daughter, who she says is constantly calling out my name—that is, yours. Oh! Selmar, my position is awful."

"No, no, old boy. We will take Miss Parkhurst as judge and jury. All blame shall be thrown on my shoulders."

"Well it may," groaned Oliver.

Though the duke was supremely happy, he was terribly disturbed at the awkward confession into which he was hurried.

A sterner judge than Iris they could not have chosen. In haughty silence she listened to the guilty one's confession,

neither by word or sign betraying the anger and mortification raging at her heart on behalf of her sister. But when the duke ceased speaking, she answered sternly and proudly :

"No words of mine, duke, could, I should imagine, reproach you more keenly than your own conscience. The selfish disguise assumed by the Duke of Melton," Iris spoke with withering scorn, "was as dishonouring to himself as to the woman he proposed to woo. And had you not been so egotistically engaged in the pursuit of your own happiness, you must have seen what hopes Captain Merrivale's attentions held out to my sister, who would, however, not marry even a duke if he failed to inspire her with respect as well as love," concluded Iris with passionate indignation.

"Forgive me, I implore, Miss Parkhurst. You do indeed make me realize the full extent of my error, but my friend is blameless. He sought to please me. He loves your sister with his whole heart and soul."

"Your friend should never have given in to your selfish wishes. He has attractions which *you* do not possess"—Iris's words flowed with uncivil and scathing bitterness—"attractions sufficient to cause any woman to love him for himself. Whether my sister does or does not, of this he may be sure, she will never marry a man who has behaved as he has."

So saying, Iris swept out of the room like a very Juno, leaving the duke utterly crushed and humiliated, and moreover deeply grieved at the ungenerous estimate he had formed of the Misses Parkhursts' character. In the passage Iris met Kate, weeping copiously. She could have beaten the poor little future duchess with pleasure. To think of this chit having won the prize instead of her glorious, beautiful sister!

"Well, Kate, I congratulate you," she said, in tones anything but congratulatory.

"Oh! don't, please don't," exclaimed Kate piteously. "Oh! Iris, I am so sorry, though I love him—oh! so much. But I wanted Hyacinth to be the duchess. I did indeed. I shall never know how to be one properly. But how could I know he was a duke?"

"How indeed! But don't be a goose, child," said Iris, unable to restrain a laugh. "I have no doubt in time you will learn to be a duchess. There, there, don't cry, Katie," said Iris kindly, "or your precious duke will fancy I have been ill-treating you. And after all we keep him in the family."

Iris spoke lightly, but her heart was full of sorrow for the sister she adored, and for whom she had anticipated such a brilliant future, and her brow clouded as she entered the darkened room where Hyacinth lay. As yet no confidence had passed between the sisters, for the doctor had forbidden the invalid all excitement. But as Iris approached Hyacinth's bed, the invalid stretched out her arms, whispering feebly as they encircled Iris's neck, "He loves me—he loves me."

The elder sister was in despair. She dared not divulge her mortifying intelligence in Hyacinth's present state, and had to wait for her convalescence, when as gently as she could she made known the bitter truth. What was her surprise when, instead of the indignation she anticipated, Hyacinth burst into a merry laugh, saying :

"I see it all now. How well he has behaved."

"Horror upon horrors ! The news has turned her brain," thought Iris. And very slowly, with impressive tenderness, she said :

"Darling, I think you have not understood me. He is *not* the duke."

"Oh ! I am so glad," replied Hyacinth, with tears in her eyes, "for now I can prove I love him for himself, which he evidently doubted."

In vain assured of her sister's perfect sanity, Iris dilated on Oliver's poverty and iniquities. Hyacinth only repeated :

"I love him ! I love him ! He saved my life, and according to your own account only erred to save his friend. But still he deserves a little punishment. Ah ! Iris, so do I, for though love has killed ambition, my love began with it. Let him still believe I am in ignorance of the trick played upon us. His punishment shall be to reveal it himself."

But Oliver's punishment had to be postponed, for that very day he received a pressing summons to his aunt's dying bed. In the meanwhile, Lady Lodore, made acquainted with the fraud, as she expressed it, practised on her credulity, also took to her bed, the poor lady's irritation doubly increased by Daphne's announcement that she had at last said "Yes" to Major Banger's annual proposal. Secretly she had long liked him, and Hyacinth's fiasco had decided her to crown the major's long devotion. A terrible fit of hysterics followed her announcement, and Lady Lodore was only restored to partial equanimity when Iris informed her she was the happy affianced wife of Sir Richard Bankwell.

A few days later Oliver returned, and feeling like a culprit was ushered into the presence of the woman he loved.

He longed to throw himself at her feet. But a true passion had made the flirting Oliver diffident, while his humiliating position deprived him of all power of speech.

In sweet convalescence Hyacinth reclined on her sofa, looking adorable in her flowing muslins, and the carnation suffusing her lovely face, as with regal dignity she held out her hand, saying sweetly :

"Come hither, *duke* !"

Oliver winced as though that fair hand had thrust a red-hot needle through his most sensitive nerve. That shrinking movement was not lost upon Hyacinth, who smiled with malice as she continued :

"I have been longing to see you, *duke*, to thank you for having saved me from a watery grave, *duke*."

Oliver, who held Hyacinth's hand, here dropped it and,

furiously red, attempted to speak, but his mouth was dry and parched, the words died in his throat, and Hyacinth continued slowly, sweeping her eyes up at him :

"I feel I owe *your grace* a debt of gratitude I can never repay, and which makes me the more regret the—the foolish words that escaped you, to—to which——"

Here Hyacinth covered her face with her handkerchief, as though to disguise her confusion.

"Foolish words, adored Hyacinth ! words of truth and honesty. Hear me, I implore ; I wish—to——"

"No, no. I may not deceive you, for to those words of the Duke of Melton I can give but one answer. I love another."

Hyacinth gave a convulsive sob behind her pocket handkerchief.

"You love another ?" gasped Oliver.

"Yes, ye—es. I love Captain——"

"Not Smithers ?" shouted Oliver in a voice of thunder.

"There are other captains in the world besides Smithers," purred from Hyacinth's lips, as suddenly taking the handkerchief from her face she looked up at Oliver with eyes brimful of love and mischief.

In an instant he read the truth in those blue eyes, and throwing himself on his knees, kissed her hand passionately, exclaiming :

"You know all, and yet forgive me. Oh ! I have suffered such tortures."

"Not undeserved, sir. How dared you think you could come among the Misses Parkhurst and not fall in love with one of them ?"

"I loved you from the first moment I saw you, darling."

"Heigho ! so I am not to be a duchess after all," said Hyacinth, gently disengaging herself from Oliver's embrace. "But don't think I am not a wee bit disappointed. And remember poverty tries love. Are you prepared for its many rubs ? If not," she added gravely, "we had better part at once, Oliver, for I believe this to be your name," she smiled archly.

"Generous, lovely Hyacinth ! by your side I could face the world as a chimney sweeper."

"Thanks, sir. But I am not partial to soot," she laughed merrily.

"And you shall not be put to the proof, my beloved. For my aunt has left me everything she possessed. I am no longer a poor man."

Hyacinth opened her eyes very wide, saying :

"I shall be able to keep a maid ?"

"Two, if you like."

"I shall never have to pack ?"

"If the maids are incapable, we will hire a professional packer."

"Then hurrah ! No longer do I bemoan my lost coronet," exclaimed the girl gaily, adding with deep earnestness :

"Ah, Oliver, true love, when it does exist in a woman's heart, leaves no room for ambition."

SOME MEN I HAVE KNOWN.

By MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON,

AUTHOR OF "IN A GRASS COUNTRY," ETC., ETC.

- I.—THE BEAUTY MAN.
II.—THE MALE FLIRT.
-

THE BEAUTY MAN.

THERE is a much-abused person in the world at whom no one fails to have a fling, whom worldlings and moralists alike have from time immemorial held up as a warning and a snare, who is seldom, if ever, credited with any solid or man-like qualities, whose gifts, like Dead Sea fruit, are but as dust and ashes, and whose glorious distinction is but his own undoing. I allude to the handsome, or, as he is aptly termed, "The Beauty Man."

Beauty is, we are told upon the very best authority, "the gift of the gods," and divers poets have also assured us that it is "a joy for ever," that it "draws us with a single hair," that it "hath strange power," and is also "its own excuse for being." Wherefore then doth it come to pass that a handsome man in these latter days is discredited and sneered at, and that in the minds of hundreds of well educated and intelligent persons his appearance, instead of being an "excuse" for anything at all, is actually prejudicial to his interests and a drawback to his popularity?

In propounding a moral problem, it is as well to go down at once to the root and origin of the subject at issue, and it has appeared to me that the causes of this perversion of the public opinion of English men and women of the present day are not very difficult to discover.

They are twofold, and lie, firstly, in the extreme rarity with which a handsome man is met with, and secondly in the injudicious treatment to which—when he is found—the *rara avis* is invariably subjected.

English women are justly and deservedly distinguished for beauty. There is hardly another nation in Europe whose capital can boast of so many beautiful women as can London. Their beauty is of so many varied kinds, of so many shades and gradations, that each one only enhances the other, and that no one type is repeated sufficiently often to become wearisome.

This is perhaps the chiefest charm of English women. They are all so different to one another. The Milanese women are a lovely race, yet every Milanese lady one meets is but the repetition of the last. One Spanish woman resembles another Spanish woman, and one Viennese differeth but little in glory from the other. But in our own country the mixed race, Saxon, Norman and Dane, intermingled with countless other strains from every nationality under the sun, has produced so varied a programme that the eyes are never satiated and the mind is never oppressed by the sameness which in other countries is apt to pall so fatally upon the taste.

English women are fair as lilies or dark as Southern houris; they are slender and graceful as the grasses of the field or they are massive and Juno-like in their proportions; they have eyes and hair of every shade under the sun, and there is no similarity either in their features or their figures. The consequence is that, as a rule, a pretty English woman is not wont to consider herself and her appearance as anything out of the ordinary way. If she is conscious of her beauty, she knows also that there are hundreds of other women who not only are as beautiful as herself, but whose style of beauty may very possibly be preferred to her own; she is seldom jealous of the good looks of her fellow women, and she is scarcely ever overweeningly vain of her own; she knows that the men who flatter her to-day will pay court to another to-morrow, and the homage she may have gained in one ball-room last night will be transferred to somebody else who may outshine her to-night in another. That is why our London beauties are seldom ungenerous to each other; they understand that the mind of man is fickle and prone to change above all created things, and that raven tresses are frequently preferred to gold. Because her own dark eyes are paramount to-day she does not forget that forget-me-not blue ones may steal away her adorer's fancy to-morrow, so that she is perpetually on her probation as it were, and ever ready to acknowledge the superior claims that her friends may possess to admiration.

Now with men things are very different. Where there are twenty beautiful women in a room, there will scarcely be found one really handsome man.

English men are manly-looking; cheery in manner; attractive from a certain clean smartness essentially their own, but they are very seldom handsome. They are indeed not often even stalwart in build, nor imposing in the matter of figure. As a rule, the young Englishman of the present day is neither very tall nor particularly well made. A big, broad-shouldered fellow is the exception, not the rule, in a London drawing-room. The scions of our noble houses are for the most part undersized and narrow-chested, and not all their Eton and University education has been able to make of them a well-grown or a fine-looking race.

When you come to their faces it is even worse. How seldom, when walking along the street, does one meet a really beautiful face amongst the men who pass by. Like their sisters they are of all types and shades of colourings, but unlike them, there is but little regularity of feature or symmetry of form amongst them. There are noses of all shapes—snub, hooked, *retroussé*, red noses, crooked noses and long noses—but never a nose amongst them all that is fashioned after a Grecian or a heroic model. You see many a pleasant face and many a clever one; faces that attract one unconsciously, whose smile is delightful, whose expression is frank and amiable, but a handsome face is but very rarely to be met with.

The inevitable consequence of this rarity is that the Beauty Man is supremely conscious of his distinction above the common herd, and is, as a rule, quite ridiculously conceited. Of course, there will be hundreds of women who will vie with one another to spoil him and to foster his vanity to its uttermost; for the old poets, who have hymned it, are not so far wrong after all, and *Beauty* is a God-given thing in the abstract still, whether it be met with in man or in woman; and a handsome fellow is a handsome fellow still in women's eyes, and will be so, no doubt, unto the end of time. So that there are other things besides his looking-glass which will teach the Beauty Man how great is his own value and how stupendous is the power which it is his to wield over the hearts and fancies of the fair sex. As he enters a room, he knows that he possesses that which other men have not, and the very consciousness of it is his ruin; he is very soon spoilt out of all knowledge, flattered out of all manliness, puffed up with a delight in himself which he has not the grace or the wit to conceal. As a necessary consequence he becomes arrogant and ill-mannered; he does not think it worth his while to make himself agreeable, and his handsome head becomes rapidly emptied of all save self-sufficiency and self-conceit.

Very soon the evil creates its own cure; a reaction sets in even amongst those who have pandered the most to his vanity. He is dubbed an ass and a fool, an insufferable puppy and an intolerable coxcomb. No good thing, in the minds of all sensible persons, can be credited to come out of him, and no intelligent woman cares to be thought foolish enough to prefer his society.

The fickle multitude sets to work to throw its small but sharp-sided stones at him.

"Mr. Adonis?" cries one fair lady; "Oh yes, I know him, of course—what a fool he is!"

"Very handsome though!"

"Yes, but so conceited. And he has no brains; nothing on earth to talk about but himself and his successes."

"Oh! I thought he admired you, my dear," retorts her friend.

"Admire *me*! Good gracious, no! Mr. Adonis admires himself so extremely that he has no time to admire anybody else."

And women do not like that. They had rather be worshipped by a Cyclops who is clever than tolerated by an Apollo who is taken up with himself.

The Beauty Man has, moreover, so great a regard for his valuable peculiarity, that he is exceedingly cautious not to underrate himself. No ordinary woman is good enough for him; the lady whom he singles out for his preference must be, like himself, of superhuman beauty. He cannot be decently civil to anybody else. *The* reigning beauty of the day—the woman who is the fashion of the year—that for him, or nothing! Talent, wit, fascination are alike thrown away upon him. The most charming conversationalist, the best educated of critics, the most popular of all the clever women in the world of art or letters is thrown away upon him, and meets with nothing better at his hands than cold, contemptuous glances, and a bow of studied indifference and disdain as he hurries past her to bestow his beautiful presence upon some one whose good looks are, he deems, sufficiently recognized to merit his notice. Everywhere else he is throwing himself away!

Poor Beauty Man! No wonder that the world is down upon him; that women with sharp-witted tongues, aye, and sharp-pointed pens, too, are not slow to repay him for his insolence and his vanity; that they are ready to join in the hue and cry against him, and to declare with the sage and the moralist that beauty is but skin deep, and fadeth as doth the flower of the field; and that a handsome man looks well enough as a statue or a picture, but that in real life he is but a brainless barber's block, and is unworthy of serious attention at the hands of any rational or well-educated being. And so the verdict goes forth that to woman shall be left the burden of beauty, which she can so gracefully and easily bear, but that a man is best without the "fatal gift," that only degrades and hampers him, and renders him incapable of any other good thing upon the face of the earth.

Talking about "Beauty Men" leads me not unnaturally to the consideration of another type of man whom we all know very well indeed, and whom, speaking as a woman, I feel a certain diffidence in mentioning—

THE MALE FLIRT.

The Male Flirt is an individual not confined to our own days, nor yet even to our own century. From time immemorial this terrible yet fascinating person has scourged society just as the pirates and buccaneers of old are said to have scourged the seas with their powerful and irresistible charm. There is a weird attraction about him, a fearful joy at his approach, a horrible and unnatural delight at the bare mention of his name. Like the

vampire of German fairy-lore, he subjugates the senses and curdles the blood at one and the same time; he is delightful and yet alarming, enticing and yet appalling, all at once. The male flirt is the terror of mothers, and the detestation of the whole race of elderly aunts and chaperones of all kinds. We have all in turn been warned against him, all cautioned to steel our hearts to his advances and to barricade the portals of our souls against his serpent-like depredations. Yet so contradictory and so foolish is the nature of woman, that there is not one of us, young or old, who has not at some time or other of our lives fallen a willing victim to this seductively dangerous individual. The male flirt is made so neither by practice nor yet by education—he is born so; just as genius, or cooking, or mathematics is born with a man, so is flirting in its higher branches implanted within him by nature. He is not often a handsome man, although he is invariably a pleasant one, and he is not as a rule popular amongst his fellow-men. Fathers and brothers eye him with suspicion, as something which they do not wholly comprehend; whilst husbands turn cold shoulders upon his blandishments, or at best treat him with a freezing politeness. Men, in short, look upon him askance, and one and all unite in running him down—but perhaps that is only because they are jealous of him.

But amongst the women he is a king. He saunters into a room with that natural air of ease and confidence which the knowledge of his power engenders within him, and at once every feminine heart is set fluttering and hoping; his hostess welcomes him with an unusual cordiality, and with two hands held out impulsively to grasp his, so that he is perforce obliged to linger a little at her side; and then he glances round with lazy deliberation and selects his victim, and straightway one woman is rendered deliriously happy, whilst fifty become immediately sensible that their fondest hopes are a failure, and are filled with unspeakable misery, envy, and jealousy! When the male flirt is talking to the one favoured lady of his choice, he is able instantly to convey to her the, no doubt erroneous impression, that she is the one and only woman on the face of the whole world with whom it is the slightest pleasure to him to converse. He never says so in words—he pays her no compliments, makes no direct observations upon her dress or her looks; his flattery is of too delicate a nature for such coarse and outspoken methods—only his manner implies unmistakable adoration, and his eyes are filled with unutterable things. He has a habit of leaving his sentences unfinished; of beginning a great deal and of breaking short into significant silences; of sighing frequently, and of looking sad and sentimental. Sometimes again he smiles into her eyes with a sort of rapture, and lowers his voice mysteriously with caressing whispers that have untold meanings in their almost inaudible murmurings.

Yet he never commits himself—not he! He is far too clever to be caught in the net he spreads so cunningly, too wary to proceed too far along that dangerous road upon which it is so keen a pleasure to him to venture.

If the woman is young and marriageable his wits are more especially sharpened to take care of himself; for he has not the very faintest intention of landing himself into the toils of matrimony, nor the remotest notion of converting the blushing girl whom he is courting in so lover-like a fashion into his wife. He would like her to be in love with him, but he is not in the very least in love with her; and when he has amused himself to the very uttermost at her expense, he throws her over without a shadow of remorse or compunction, and takes himself off to fresh fields and pastures new.

Woe, then, to the luckless maiden who, regardless of the warnings of her guardians, has been so foolish as to allow herself to be carried away by the fascinations of the dangerous man! Her day is soon over, her reign very speedily at an end, and she is left to become a laughing stock to her fellow-women, and to bewail her desertion with heart burnings and bitter jealousy.

The male flirt is the *mauvais sujet* of society. Every woman cries shame upon him, and yet every woman has a secret tenderness at the bottom of her heart towards him. He is so reckless and so audacious, such a very Lothario in his goings on, that do what he will, he is always pardoned for his sins and treated with an indulgence which he very little deserves. For after all he is a cold-hearted, calculating individual, with no other motive for his conduct than an overweening vanity, whose insatiable appetite he must feed at all costs and at every risk. Small matter it is to him if he hurt a too impressionable heart, or raise hopes which he has not the faintest intention of fulfilling; to enjoy himself and to render a woman conspicuous by his attentions are the only ends which he has in view. Yet now and again it happens that the male flirt meets his match and is paid back in his own coin.

Now and then some married woman sets herself seriously to work to meet him upon his own ground, and to make a fool of him as he has made a fool of others—then indeed he meets at last with his due reward, and there is joy and triumph all along the ranks of his deserted victims. For there must always be some vulnerable spot even in the hardest and most callous of men, and a clever woman of the world knows very well that if she cannot injure a man's heart, she can at all events wound that which is a far more important item of his nature—his vanity.

It is this counterbalancing influence, no doubt, which robs the male flirt of a large portion of his power of evil, and which makes a too indulgent public resign itself with patience to his machinations. He is a destroying angel, no doubt, but sometimes he gets destroyed himself, and then there are pæans of joy at his dis-

comfiture, and shouts of delight over his downfall. Moreover, heartless and unprincipled although he may be, yet it is impossible not to feel a certain amount of honest admiration for his gifts.

He sails so easily upon the surface of society's pitfalls, swims so comfortably with the tide, knows so exactly when to retire and how to obliterate himself in the very nick of time, that one cannot help crediting him with high and rare powers of self-preservation.

For he knows perfectly well how to compromise a woman's name, and yet shift the blame from his own shoulders on to hers directly it becomes prudent to beat a retreat. He is a very master in the art of innuendo; he understands how to uplift his eyebrows and to shrug his shoulders; to smile a little cynical smile of deprecation; and with a faint gesture of the hands, how to express things which, if they were to be spoken in words, would brand him as a blackguard and a villain.

"Poor little woman!" his silent pantomime seems to say; "is it my fault that she fell over head and ears in love with me? Can a man be blamed if a lady throws herself at his head? and is he not an ass of the purest water if he turn his back upon the *bonnes fortunes* which come tumbling unsought into his arms!"

And so the fickle tide of public opinion backs him up, and the woman goes to the wall and gets all the blame and the shame, and the man gets off scot free, and goes on his way rejoicing and chuckling to himself over his cleverness and good luck.

But that is only the way of the world, and will be so, no doubt, until the end of it, so that women can never complain or rebel against the unalterable laws of it.

Meanwhile the male flirt starts afresh, and soon distinguishes himself anew, and women continue to greet him with smiles and to surrender themselves with gladness to his fascinations, refusing steadfastly to profit by the experience of others, and preferring with a blind persistence to purchase that commodity for themselves. And bad as he is we could not do very well without him—society would deplore his loss, and life be insipid without his dangerous presence. There is ever a romance about his history, and the halo of a mysterious nebulae over his surroundings. And so it comes to pass that the male flirt continues to be welcomed and made much of amongst us, and that we are still "to his faults a little blind, and to his virtues very kind."

A DAY-DREAM.

By J. SALE LLOYD,

AUTHOR OF "SHADOWS OF THE PAST," "RUTH EVERINGHAM," "WE COSTELIONS,"
"GOLD AND SILVER," ETC., ETC., ETC.

THERE is yet a lovely unspoiled seaside nook in our ever-altering and supposed-to-be improving island.

Few tourists have even heard of it, and to prevent their encroaching upon its peaceful territory and breaking its refreshing quietude, the secret of its whereabouts must remain a mystery.

It lies in a tiny bay, all wooded down to the water's brink, with green hills rising at the back, and away to the right there is good cover for game in the thick half-wild tangle of undergrowth, where the white-tailed rabbits scurry about by hundreds, or sit sunning themselves in inanimate brown heaps of lazy luxury. A sudden bend inland discloses a beautiful estuary, which winds its way among the foot of the hills, looking soft and silent, with scarcely a ripple to move its surface.

Cottages are dotted about here and there, covered with roses, and jasmine, and clematis, and the gardens are filled with flowers.

A picturesque old-world house stands alone upon the rising ground overlooking the sea, sheltered from every rough blast, with oranges and lemons growing upon its walls, and myrtles in full blossom under its abbey-like windows.

From the hills inland, the view is pastoral and idyllic; there is a wood of tender green larches, with a background of dark blue pines.

Fields of waving golden corn, fields of emerald turnip, and purple beets, and mangel.

Hedge-rows festooned with wild roses, briony, and eglantine, carpeted with primroses, violets, and ferns.

Narrow winding lanes, all overhung with trees, with rustic stiles leading from them across the country, and in the distance lay a village, from the cottages of which the white smoke went up like summer clouds into the azure sky; and the steeple of the old church was peeping from among the many-generation-old trees.

Captain Bertram Berkeley, who was quartered with his regiment in the same county, noticed it while out sailing in the regimental yacht, nestling like a tiny gem in its verdant setting, and a fancy seized him to pay it a visit.

There was not one of his brother-officers of his own standing whom he did not pester to accompany him thither, till it became almost a joke among them.

"My dear fellow," remonstrated his great friend, Hubert Falkner, "we should be buried alive in such a dull place; why, there can be nothing on earth to do there. Go, by all means, if you want a fit of the blues, but don't ask any one else to share your fate."

Well, he obtained leave of absence, and he *did* go!

They took him to the little bay in the yacht, and put him on shore with his small portmanteau, promising to return for him that day week, and sailed away again, laughing at Bertram's folly.

The first afternoon he enjoyed thoroughly. Everything was so new, and bright, and fresh, and lovely.

He found a quaint ivy-clad little inn, where the landlady was apple-cheeked and good-looking, and he intrusted himself for the week to her tender mercies; and having ascertained from her the prettiest walks, he started off for a round, inhaling the sea breezes with avidity, and ended his day upon the beach, where he sat till dusk, lazily throwing stones into the water.

That night he wrote to his friend:

"DEAR FALKNER,—

"You were wrong not to come; it is charming! Jolly little inn and pretty little hostess. Lovely walks; all I want is a companion. You had better join me.

"Yours,

"B. B."

But Captain Falkner did not see it in the same light, and Bertram Berkeley remained alone.

The day after, he followed a lane which he had not noticed before. It appeared to lead up to the rough and tangled undergrowth upon the hill-side, and he thought he might get that way to the sea.

Suddenly he stopped, for before him lay a home which was a perfect idyl. A many-gabled, golden-thatched cottage of considerable size, showing on all sides the signs of affluence. It was covered with rare climbing plants; the very air was redolent with the perfume of the roses of all sorts, which clustered in every available spot.

The fences were rustic, and entwined with ivy and virginian creeper.

The lawns were smooth as a billiard-table and soft as moss.

The flower-beds were filled with blossom; but it was neither upon house, nor lawn, nor rustic work, nor flowers, that his eyes were fixed, but upon the figure of a girl of some twenty years of

age, reclining in a low garden chair, intently reading a book ; and the more he gazed the greater grew his admiration.

She was totally unaware of his presence, and it was evident that spectators were not usual in that hidden corner, all among the trees, and hedge-rows, and tangled undergrowth.

It was quite a surprise to find this little paradise of perfume there ; as though some fairy had conjured it up with her magic wand, and the recumbent girl was fit for the princess in the fairy tale. She had masses of gold-brown waving hair hanging down loosely about her shoulders and almost touching the ground, and the sunbeams were giving it their own bright shades.

She had evidently been out to bathe, and was letting the sun and air dry her luxuriant tresses for her.

Her eyes were hidden by their long fringed lashes, but the rest of the oval face was perfect.

In repose the mouth vied with Cupid's bow in shape ; the nose was short and straight, the ears like tiny sea-shells, the chin dimpled, the brow broad and white and intellectual, partly hidden by short curls, which the water had but made more wavy.

She was dressed in a plain white flannel costume, which clung to her figure and revealed its perfect symmetry, while a pretty foot in a neat black shoe and stocking was peeping from beneath the white skirt, and Bertram saw that the ankle was slender and the instep arched, and the white hands and rounded arms shown by her somewhat short sleeves were none the less to his taste.

Upon her lap lay a tiny Yorkshire terrier asleep, and she stroked it while she read.

"What a girl ! A regular Venus !" murmured the watcher, "And has a mind too ; how attentively she reads."

How long he stood regarding her he never knew, but it was, he admitted to himself, a considerable time.

She got impatient with her book, the author had not pleased her.

"Rubbish !" she cried ; "sentimental trash !" and flung the volume aside.

"Sensible, too," said Captain Berkeley ; "by Jove ! she's a *rara avis*."

Her sudden movement had awoke her fluffy little rat of a dog, and he began to bark furiously, with a sharp "yap, yap," for he had at last found out the near vicinity of a stranger.

Bertram's goddess turned suddenly, and looked searchingly towards the spot where he stood.

"Heavens ! what eyes ! Blue as a sapphire in the sunlight, with black fringed lashes !" Soldier as he was, and carpet knight, he could do nothing but stare, dazzled by her unusual beauty.

A shade of annoyance crossed the beautiful face as she turned away and walked towards the house, fondling the happy little dog as she went along.

How gracefully she walked, with an ease and elasticity in her

movements not often seen. He continued watching, but the white-robed figure appeared no more.

He found his road to the sea, happily unconscious that it was a private one and that he was trespassing, and returned the same way.

His divinity was singing, and her voice was as sweet and beautiful as her face :

“Why should we parted be, Kathleen Aroon?
When thy fond heart’s with me, Kathleen Aroon.”

Why indeed? How he longed to go in and say all sorts of insane and impossible things to her!

He made a perch for himself upon an ivy-clad wall, and listened until voice and piano ceased; then he heard her call her horrid little dog, and she came to the hall door with it in her arms, and kissed it and called it her darling, and the little wretch found him out again and began once more to yap like a child’s toy, and ashamed to be caught watching her, he slid from his hiding-place upon the ground out of sight.

“Little stupid!” she said, looking around, “no one is there;” and because the small animal wriggled so she set it down. She had asserted that no one was there, but Tiny knew better, and having squeezed itself through the rustic work it vigorously attacked the captain’s stockinged legs, for he had a shapely calf, and was indulging in knickerbockers.

The little brute “worried” him so terribly that he beat a hasty retreat and left it in possession of the field.

That evening he smoked profoundly, drawing at his cigar like a man in deep thought; moreover, a rare thing for Bertram Berkeley, he dreamed—and his dreams were of blue eyes and golden hair.

His first waking thought was of the princess of the fairy cottage.

“She bathes,” he said. “I will go down to the sea shore;” and sprang out of bed and went without even asking for his breakfast, and regardless of the cravings of the inner man, he stayed on the beach till twelve, but she never came. Hungry and dissatisfied he returned to the inn and ate his burnt-up viands, which had been waiting for him since ten o’clock, and started for that narrow lane once more. This time he was not disappointed; there she was!

Her hair was plaited and coiled up, and she looked like a young queen, and in his mind he apostrophized her as a Juno.

He hid behind some thick shrubs, and prayed that his enemy might not discover him. A sun hat was in her left hand, and she placed it upon her head, and turning to a mowing-machine which stood upon the lawn, she set to work with a will to cut the grass, and the sharp bright blades revolved as the verdant atoms flew before her.

“Strong and muscular, too,” he said admiringly; “no doctor’s bills for her! What a wife she will make!”

The grass was finished and the bright vision vanished, and once more the thoughtful mood descended upon the captain.

He was up again early the next morning and down upon the beach, but his divinity was earlier still, and was already in the water, dressed in the prettiest of French bathing costumes, and swimming about like a fish.

When she perceived the stranger she swam behind a projecting rock and darted with wonderful agility through the wooded path up the hill-side and out of sight.

"And modest!" cried Bertram with enthusiasm; "I wish to goodness I knew her."

He had his wish, in a measure, that afternoon. He met her accidentally out walking, and Tiny was with her.

For once he blessed that dog. He snarled at a strong fox terrier, who immediately bowled him over, with the evident intention of making mince-meat of him.

Here was a grand opportunity! No one disliked the idea of hydrophobia more than Bertram Berkeley, but he was not the man to lose such a chance. He rushed to the rescue, and administering a severe chastisement upon the bellicose animal, delivered the small creature in safety to its anxious mistress.

"Oh, thank you, very, very much!" she said eagerly. "It was so good of you to save my little pet. I am *most* grateful to you;" and she raised her beautiful blue eyes to his face, while his heart beat with a heavy thud, worthy of the Nasmyth hammer.

He was a handsome fellow, and she acknowledged the fact to herself as she looked up to his animated countenance—the clear, dark eyes, the closely-cropped hair and clean-shaved bronzed face—save for the heavy brown moustache—the tall manly figure, and erect carriage.

"It has been more than a pleasure to serve you," he murmured, raising his hat chivalrously. "I am delighted I was upon the spot; such savage dogs ought to be muzzled."

He turned as he spoke and walked by her side.

"So far out of London such regulations are not enforced," she answered with a smile.

"No, but they ought to be if hydrophobia is to be stamped out of England."

"I hope you have not let that animal bite you?" she said anxiously.

"Oh dear no! What a lovely little place this is!"

"Yes. You are a stranger here?" she said interrogatively.

"Quite. I confess I should prefer having a companion, but I have enjoyed my stay here so far; they take great care of me at the inn."

"They are very respectable people," she returned demurely.

"What an exquisite little cottage yours is," he said, after a pause; "do you know I saw you in your garden a day or two since."

"Yes, I recognized you again," she returned quietly. "Tiny rather objected to you, but he did not know you would prove a friend in need to him," she ended with a sunny laugh.

"No. He was decidedly antagonistic," he answered, laughing too.

"Do you want to muzzle *him*?" she asked.

"I'm afraid so; if the thing is to be done at all it should be done properly, but if any dog in the world is exempted that one should be Tiny."

"Because he is so amiable?" she queried.

"No, because his mistress is," replied he gallantly.

"That was well turned," she laughed; "and now I must wish you good-day; our roads lie apart, I am going home."

A look of regret passed across his features, and his eyes fell upon a cluster of delicate Marshal Niel roses upon her shoulder.

"What exquisite blossoms!" he said; "may I ask a great favour?"

"You have done me one," she answered graciously, "and have certainly the right to demand one in return."

"I haven't a flower in my room," he said in a low voice; "may I crave one of your roses for my table?"

"One would be of little use—you are welcome to the whole bunch, they will fill a small vase," she answered readily, and unpinning them she placed them in his hand with a natural unconcerned bow, as she turned in the direction of her golden-thatched cottage with her dog in her arms.

"Grateful, and generous, and affectionate," he decided, and pressed the roses to his lips. That night he wrote again to his friend:

"DEAR FALKNER,—

"*I have met my fate.* It is no use your coming for me; I shall get my leave extended. She is enchanting! It is serious this time, old fellow, so don't laugh.

"Yours ever,

"B. B."

He haunted that lane. Sometimes he spoke to her over the fence; she was very gracious to him, but she did not ask him in.

Once she was walking in the garden with an elderly man.

"Her father," he told himself. "What a nice-looking old fellow; I must get hold of *him*, and then it will be all right.

He telegraphed to Covent Garden for a bouquet of rare exotics to be sent down to him by parcels post. They came, and he went and left them at the house himself, with his card attached, and underneath he wrote, "In grateful return for the roses," and closed the box once more.

A neat maid received it from his hands, and by her "*Merci, monsieur*," he discovered she was a Frenchwoman.

He asked no questions, and left no message, not wishing to expose his ignorance of even his lady's name.

He walked on, but he was restless, and returned once more and sat upon the wall to watch. Surely his divinity would come out soon. She did, with the garden hose in her hand, and set to work diligently to water. Suddenly she turned it in the captain's direction, and soused him through and through. Then, with a silvery laugh, quickly checked, she made her apologies.

"Dear me, Captain Berkeley!" she said with much apparent concern, "I'm afraid I have sprinkled you a little."

"Sprinkled" him! He was wet through; but he vowed it was "nothing," and that he "liked it," and she thanked him so sweetly for the bouquet, that he was quite happy, only his happiness was short-lived, for she had a pressing engagement and hastened indoors at once. He sauntered to the inn, and changed his clothes, then started for a walk, *thinking of her*.

A dog-cart was dashing along the road, and suddenly a cheery voice aroused him.

"Hallo, Berkeley! Where on earth have you sprung from? Who would ever have expected you to turn up in this quiet corner?" and the speaker handed the reins to his cockaded groom and jumped down to greet his friend and old brother-officer, shaking him warmly by the hand.

"I may very well return the compliment, La Coste," laughed Bertram Berkeley. "I have never once seen you since you left us at 'Gib.' two years ago; fancy my meeting you in this quiet place, when no quarters used to be gay enough for you."

"Ah! I've sown all my wild oats, old fellow, and married, and settled down into the bargain; and what's more, I don't regret it."

"*Tant mieux pour vous!*" I fear there are not many such prizes in the matrimonial market."

"Can't say. I never had a bad opinion of the sex, as you are aware, and *my* wife has raised my estimate of womenkind."

"Lucky man!"

"I echo your sentiment. I suppose you're still adamant! No one has made an impression, eh?"

Captain Berkeley positively flushed under the bronze, and thoughtfully pulled his moustache.

"By Jove! you're in for it," laughed Major La Coste. "Well, come and dine with us to-night, and I will introduce you to my wife, and you can tell me all about it over our cigar after dinner."

"What, you are living here then?"

"Yes! We have a pretty little box. Where are you staying? I'll stroll down and take you back in triumph; it will be quite a treat to hear all the news of the old regiment."

"I'll come with pleasure; I'm putting up at the little inn. What time do you dine?"

"Seven, and I'll fetch you at a quarter to," and with a friendly nod, the major jumped up once more into his dog-cart.

"Can I take you anywhere, Berkeley?"

"No thanks, I'll continue my walk;" and so the friends parted.

Major La Coste arrived with military punctuality, and there was a strange smile upon his handsome face and lurking in the depths of his fine grey eyes.

"Are you ready?" he asked. "We must not keep dinner waiting—your cook is the last person in the world whom you should offend."

They chatted briskly as they walked up the lane.

"Here we are," said La Coste, throwing open his gate; "pretty little place, is it not? But perhaps you may have seen it before, in your rambles."

"You don't live *here!*" stammered his visitor; "I thought—I didn't think——"

"Of course you didn't, old fellow; come in and see my wife."

Without one word, Bertram Berkeley followed him.

Mechanically he hung up his hat in the hall, mechanically he went with him into the room, of which he flung open the door, with a strange feeling as of a sleep-walker about him. It seemed to him he was having some unpleasant dream, and that he was spell-bound by it; that he could hear, and see, and feel, but that all power over himself was denied him.

"Geraldine, here is my friend, Captain Berkeley—Berkeley, allow me to introduce you to my wife."

The eyes of Major and Mrs. La Coste danced with merriment.

"I think Captain Berkeley and I have met before," said the lady in a musical voice, and the music and words of "Kathleen Aroon" sounded afresh in the listener's ears.

"Why should we parted be?"

"Why, indeed!"

"Lawrence, dear, Captain Berkeley was so very kind; he saved my poor little Tiny from being hurt by such a horrid savage dog; I am sure, like myself, you are infinitely obliged to him. Dinner? thanks, the passages are too narrow for taking arms, we just follow the leader; shall I go first, and show the way? See what a lovely centre-piece your exquisite flowers make!" and she waved her delicate white hand towards the bouquet he had left for her, which was in the middle of the well-appointed table, which was laden with beautiful blossoms.

"Lawrence, was it not kind of Captain Berkeley to send me such lovely exotics; and all in exchange for a cluster of common roses; don't you think I had the best of the bargain?"

"Undoubtedly," he laughed, and again their eyes met.

"I do hope I did not splash you much with that horrid hose this afternoon, but how *was* I to know any one was sitting upon the wall? You see the lane is a private road, and no one ever

passes this way, so I couldn't expect you, could I?" and she looked at him quizzically.

"Private!" he faltered, "I beg your pardon; I didn't know."

"Of course not, but you would have been very welcome, as Lawrence's friend, had I been aware of it, I'm sure; and I must make Tiny respect his protector. Lawrence has been a whole week away in London, and left me here alone. Did he tell you?"

"No," answered the captain. "I don't think he did."

He did no justice to the *recherché* little dinner; all he wanted to do was to escape. He knew that he had made a fool of himself, and was well aware that Mrs. La Coste knew it too; and more, that she had told her husband all about it.

"Well, now for your confession, Berkeley," said the major, as he lighted his cigar by that of his friend, and talked between the whiffs. "What is she like? Dark or fair, merry or pensive? Beautiful, of course, or she never would have attracted you."

"There is no 'she' in the case," asserted the other, almost roughly, "and never will be. I thought you wanted to hear all about the old set; there have been a lot of changes, even in this short time."

"And so I do; drive on, Berkeley. I'm settled as a good listener," and he ensconced himself in an Indian lounging chair, looking thoroughly at home.

But the Captain never before was so vague and disjointed, and took his leave as early as he possibly could.

That night he drew up a telegram, and desired it might be sent off at the earliest hour the following morning. It was to his friend Falkner, begging him to bring the yacht to fetch him the same day.

He was waiting upon the seashore with his small portmanteau beside him when the little craft hove in sight, and they sent a boat to the shore to bring him on board.

"Well, old man, and how is the fair inamorata?" laughed his friend, looking at his clouded face.

"She is, like all the rest, a heartless coquette," returned Berkeley savagely.

Captain Falkner gave a long low whistle.

"Does the wind lie that way? Well, old fellow, I was once jilted myself, and I can sympathize with you."

"Jilted," replied the other sharply, "I've not been jilted, I've only been made a fool of. I fell in love with a married woman, and she and her husband enjoyed the joke together; that's all, and so ends my day-dream."

And from that hour Captain Berkeley has never been known to mention the subject.

Captain Falkner learnt the details later on from Major La Coste, who seemed to think the affair rare fun.

A FALSE START.

By HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "BAD TO BEAT," "THE OUTSIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. MOLECOMBE GETS UNEASY.

MR. PICK listened to the further evolution of Richard Madingley's scheme with considerable interest, but not altogether with enthusiasm. No man keener than him to turn five hundred pounds into a thousand in a few weeks, and that, he computed, was about the price he ought to receive for his assistance, pecuniarily and otherwise. But then Mr. Pick had a wholesome dread of placing himself within the clutches of the law, and he had a vague idea that the personation of a well-known personage would come under the head of fraud or conspiracy, or something of that sort. Moral scruples the bookmaker had none, still he had escaped once or twice by the skin of his teeth; had indeed once left the dock under the lash of the judge's tongue, and had to listen to the regrets of that functionary that his wrong-doing had been so skilfully planned as to just defeat the administration of justice. No, Mr. Pick did not approve of the bill of fare at Millbank. No, the bookmaker, although he had embarked on some very risky enterprizes in his early career, was too substantial a man now not to weigh possible results, however profitable the game might appear to be, and anything that looked like ending in a law-court he shrank from. He was not quite clear whether the personation of somebody else was not an indictable offence. He rather thought it was, he had hazy ideas of "conspiracy with intent to defraud," being a transgression that carried severe pains and penalties. His mouth watered at the idea of the sum he might demand for his help, but he had no idea of burning his fingers in pulling Dick's chestnuts out of the fire.

"I've been thinking this out," he said slowly, after a silence of some moments, which the other had taken care not to interrupt. "It's rather a risky business, and if I go into it you'll have to pay pretty smartly for my help. I tell you what I'll do. I'll come down and look at it, and that's as much as I'll promise just now. If I fancy the spec, well and good, if not, there's no harm done."

"You will come back with me to-morrow; remember it is important that I should produce the relation from whom I have

expectations as soon as may be. I never saw John Madingley, but you have, and well know the sort of line to take up—country parson with sporting tastes.”

“I can’t personate him to anybody who has ever seen him,” replied Mr. Pick, “but the chances are nobody in Tunnleton ever has. I’ll be ready to-morrow; you wire and order dinner,” and, so saying, the bookmaker rose to his feet and, nodding good-night, left the room.

Could the precious pair have overheard a conversation at Tunnleton, the going down there would have been deemed inexpedient by both of them.

“No, Madingley, I ran up to town and did what you wished, but you had better, at present, let things take their course. At all events there is nothing to be done with your namesake till he returns. They know nothing about this young gentleman at Scotland Yard, and pooh-poohed the whole business. Said that he very likely had a right to the name, and had only exaggerated in claiming relationship with you. In short,” concluded General Shrewster, “they decline to interfere at present in any way, and I suppose they’re right. This fellow would probably declare he only claimed to be a distant connection of yours, and that the rest was merely Tunnleton gossip.”

“Yes,” replied John Madingley, “it is always open to a man to claim that sort of kinship, and he does himself little harm even if the other side disavow it.”

“Yes, a cool hand like this young gentleman will get out of it easily enough. He does not want money apparently, and is certainly not deficient in cheek.”

“I know the sort,” rejoined Madingley laughing, “plenty of bounce and swagger till they’re collared. We’ll leave the fellow alone, and only give Mr. Molecombe a hint in case his daughter’s marriage with my namesake becomes imminent. It will be for him then to discover whether Mr. Richard Madingley is sailing under false colours or not.”

“Yes,” replied Shrewster with a quiet smile, “and it will be a terrible shock to Tunnleton should he turn out to be a rank impostor.”

“Yes,” rejoined the master of Bingwell, “the idea that he has been regularly had rouses the bile of the Yorkshireman, and I don’t suppose the southerners take it more kindly.”

So, it having been settled between them that for the present they would merely watch the course of events, neither John Madingley nor his old friend troubled themselves any more for the present about the doings of this new star that had suddenly risen above the town horizon.

But if they did not trouble themselves about Dick Madingley’s proceedings Tunnleton did; and the Prauns and the Maddoxes and the Torkeslys shook their heads, and agreed that there was

something excessively odd in the newly-engaged man's persistent absence. Mr. Pick had suddenly found that his own legitimate business would detain him some time longer in London, and with the somewhat hazardous game that Richard Madingley was playing he did not consider it advisable to re-appear upon the scene until his pockets were replenished. On that point Mr. Pick was very decided—he would advance no money until, as he expressed it, he had been “to look at the speculation.”

Mrs. Maddox said boldly that the young men had changed a good deal since her time; that if Maddox had treated her in such *nonchalant* fashion after they were engaged he would very soon have “had the mitten.”

Mrs. Praun opined that there was no standing the youth of the present day, they really seemed to expect the young ladies to do all the love-making, to which her irascible husband responded, “And by gad, madam, they are not disappointed,” which produced one of those Mediterranean squalls wont to disturb the even tenor of the Prauns' domestic life—a hot-tempered couple who not only indulged in volcanic explosions at home, but combined in volcanic irruptions abroad, and were a terror and—metaphorically—a very lava-flood to any weak-kneed society they might get into. As for the Maddoxes, they never boiled, but persistently gurgled, like the steady, monotonous wash of the sea against the shore; dangerous in their very persistency in any view they might have taken up. But there was one very curious thing in all this which wrought very much to the *soi-disant* Richard Madingley's advantage. Influenced considerably by their enmity to Maurice Enderby, still further stimulated by the Reverend John Madingley declining to make their acquaintance, the two generals gradually worked themselves into the belief that John Madingley was an impostor.

It's astonishing how it is possible to persuade one's self to a belief in accordance with one's wishes, albeit we have no facts whatever to justify that opinion, and the Maddoxes and the Prauns were not at all people to keep what they thought to themselves. The consequence of all this was, that, far from suspicion falling upon the impostor, there was a lurking misgiving that the Reverend John Madingley was not what he represented himself to be; in the eyes of the Prauns and the Maddoxes a clergyman like Maurice Enderby, who “dabbled in horse-racing,” would be capable of almost anything; they would hardly have hesitated at almost openly insinuating that the whole thing was a fraud but for one fact; there was no getting over that: General Shrewster knew and visited the Reverend Mr. Madingley, and he was not only above suspicion but carried far too many guns to be assailed with impunity; he might have been imposed upon, but it was not likely, nor did even General Praun feel that he should care about hinting *that* to him. Shrewster's social position was beyond

dispute, and he had more than once shown that he could say very bitter things when provoked. Tunnleton had long ago come to the conclusion that Shrewster was a man to be let alone.

But a man who was made wonderfully uneasy by all these varied rumours was Mr. Molecombe. He was pledged to give his daughter to this young man Richard Madingley. Here was his kinsman, from whom, according to his own account, he expected to inherit this Yorkshire property, and that kinsman firmly but politely refused to see Mr. Molecombe; although the banker had written and explained the peculiar relations under which he stood to Richard Madingley, the recluse of Bingwell, although actually residing in Tunnleton, kept his doors resolutely closed upon him. Then these sinister rumours reached his ears that the Rev. John Madingley was an impostor, and this, with the prolonged absence of his son-in-law that was to be, still further increased the banker's uneasiness. It was difficult for him to get—not at the real state of things, but even at what people thought; it was not likely that men like Generals Praun and Maddox would confide their suspicions to him, and a wholesome respect for General Shrewster made them rather shy of expressing their opinion publicly. The banker was much attached to his child, and that he should feel uncomfortable about her engagement was only natural, and there could be no doubt about it, that just at present Mr. Richard Madingley's real *status* was under suspicion. General Shrewster was the only man behind the scenes, for John Madingley had not even confided to the Enderbys that he knew nothing whatever of this young gentleman who had thought proper to claim kinship with him. Shrewster was, what he would have termed, watching the match with great interest. "Madingley's quite right," he would mutter to himself, "in waiting for this impostor to show his hand; unless he has heard of John Madingley's arrival, and got scared, he is bound to make the first move, and then it will be a case of checkmate almost immediately. The Scotland Yard people are right; we must allow this young gentleman a little more rope in order to make his discomfiture a certainty. However, if he should come back to Tunnleton there will be no doubt about that, and in any case it is clearly John Madingley's duty to interfere, and prevent Edith Molecombe being married to this man."

Mr. Pick's business being at length brought to a conclusion, it was settled that he should run down to Tunnleton that evening in the assumed character of Dick's uncle, and see what he thought of things. Madingley at once telegraphed to his servants to have dinner and a spare bed made ready, and a little before six he and Mr. Pick settled themselves comfortably in a first-class carriage and started for their destination.

There was only one other passenger, and he was apparently absorbed in his cigar and evening paper. Dick cast one long keen

glance at him, and then, coming to the conclusion that he had never seen the stranger before, began conversing in a desultory way about the past Ascot and Goodwood. Bob Grafton, for he was the stranger, pricked up his ears, as he always did when the talk ran in that groove, but refrained from joining in it. Suddenly he became haunted with the idea that he had met the elder of his companions before, and yet for the life of him he could not recollect where or who he was. The man was like a dim shadow of the past connected in Grafton's mind with some unpleasant incident. Ever and anon he stole furtive glances over his paper at Mr. Pick, but it was of no use; the bookmaker was to him like the blurred photograph of some one he had known, but now failed to recognize.

On arrival at Tunnleton Bob got out, for he was on his way to Bridge Court, and purposed taking a fly from the station to convey him thither. Rather to his astonishment, his fellow-travellers followed his example, and as they drove off Grafton asked the porter, who was busied with his luggage, whether he knew them.

"The young un's Mr. Madingley, sir, but I never saw the other gentleman before."

"Madingley!" exclaimed Grafton, as he jumped into his fly. "I have it—that's the fellow who found out John Madingley's mare was lame at Epsom, and got such a lot of money out of her for the Oaks—Pick, the bookmaker, and if all that was said about it was true, nobody was more likely to have early information inasmuch as he was accused of causing it. What can have brought that precious scoundrel to Tunnleton?"

"All right, Phillips; here we are," said Dick Madingley, as his well-trained servant opened the door the moment the fly stopped. Take my uncle's things up to his room; dinner in a quarter of an hour; and where have you put my letters?"

"You will find them on the mantelpiece in the drawing-room, sir," and as he spoke Dick fancied Mr. Phillips eyed Mr. Pick with no little surprise and curiosity. But apparently the man saw he was observed, for he turned hastily away and disappeared to attend to his duties.

"All fancy, I suppose," muttered Dick; "there's nothing remarkable in my having an uncle. Most people have till stricken in years, and yet somehow that beggar Phillips struck me as looking astonished. Now for my letters: hum, small tradesmen's accounts, a tea at the Torkeslys, will I join a house-dinner at the club, an invitation or two for garden-parties, and, hum! a note from my papa-in-law as is to be. 'Will I call as soon as I return? is most anxious to see me on a matter of great importance.' Now what maggot has he got in his head? However, I don't mean to see him to-night, to-morrow will do for him. Dinner and a bottle of wine's the first thing, anyway."

During dinner young Madingley kept up the farce and was extremely civil to his apocryphal uncle. Phillips's face gave no sign, though nothing escaped his keen eyes, and some of Mr. Pick's *gaucheries* might have put a less thoroughly trained servant off his balance; that gentleman, indeed, was not above harpooning anything he fancied with his own fork, and utterly ignored salt-spoons while his knife was in his hand, plunging the blade in freely when wanting that condiment. The meal over, and Mr. Pick having pronounced it a very pretty notion of a feed, the bookmaker settled down to a cigar and brandy and water. Champagne he understood, but the best of claret had no attractions for him.

"Look here, old man," said Dick, "you've got all you want in the way of tobacco, &c., and there's books of all sorts on those shelves. I just want to slip down to the club for an hour, and hear what's been going on while I was away. Necessary, you see, in the rather ticklish game I'm playing to have the gossip of the place at my finger-ends."

"Quite right. Don't you mind me. I've a shrewd suspicion you're out of your depth already. You can't keep too close an eye on the current. Let it once turn against you, and the sooner you slope the better."

"You're right. Shall see you when I come back;" and, with a nod to his friend, Dick took up his hat and sallied out into the night-air.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE GAME ABOUT UP.

MR. PICK, left to his own reflections, began in his parlance to reckon up the trumps in their hand. "Yes, this sort of crib and turn-out looks like money, and as for Dick's name he's always gone under that of Madingley, and that he's no relation to old John is no fault of his. He's quite willing to belong to the family *if* they'll let him. It was a very good plant to come down here and look out for a wife with money, and, according to Dick, it looks like coming off if he can carry on a little longer. But there's one very awkward corner to get round. These swells always go in for what they call settlements—means, I suppose, putting down your picture cards and showing what money you've got and where you keep it. Now Dick must come to grief over that. He's only one chance, to run away with the girl and trust to the old man coming round afterwards. It's a risky game, and I shall charge pretty high for what I put into it."

Then Mr. Pick selected a novel from the book-case and sat down to enjoy for the twentieth time the account of the great "Oriel" trial in Digby Grand; for, like most men, Mr. Pick enjoyed the

description of life and scenes within his own immediate experience. But he had not been reading long when the opening of the house-door announced the return of Dick Madingley.

"It's all U P," exclaimed that worthy; "and the sooner you clear out of Tunnleton the better."

"Why, what has happened?" inquired Mr. Pick.

"John Madingley is here, and has been for the last week. All Tunnleton knows it."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Pick. "Yes, you're right—you are knocked out of time. Now the next thing is to get out as easy as we can."

"I don't know about *easy*," replied Dick. "I should think we had better get out as quick as we can."

"Now, look here, young man," replied Mr. Pick impressively; "you can't be said to have my experience of tight places, and there's many an awkward circumstance in a man's career may be got over if he'll only just *brass it out*; now, I have no intention of putting myself in a bustle, I can tell you."

"Why, good gracious!" exclaimed Dick; "you come down here as John Madingley, and here's the very man himself in the town—what the deuce are you thinking of?"

"Never mind what I came down for; no one has heard you call me anything but 'uncle' as yet. Can't you have an uncle on your mother's side as well as your father's? Bless you, my boy, I'm your Uncle Popkins, or anything else you like to call me—bar Madingley—as for that 'uncle,' you must stick to it that they misunderstood you."

"But you don't suppose that will satisfy old Molecombe, do you?" replied Dick.

"No; nor that you will marry his daughter," retorted the book-maker.

"I don't know about that," replied Dick doggedly. "If I am not mistaken, Edith is really fond of me, and when that is the case a girl don't throw you over just because her father says 'no.'"

"Ah! then you *do* think that probable?"

"Never had a doubt about it," rejoined Dick sententiously; "when it came to the settlements it was hardly likely that any hankey-pankey work you or I could manage would blind a man of business like Molecombe. No, I'll take your advice, and play the game out. I shall have to see Molecombe to-morrow, and no doubt get my dismissal when I disclaim all connection with John Madingley."

"Good," said Mr. Pick sententiously; "it comes exactly to what I reckoned it up at when you were out. Run away with the girl, if you can, and trust to the stony-hearted father relenting afterwards. I don't mean putting much money into the business, I tell you, but I'll stay with you a week, and find you enough to carry on for a month on the old terms; if it don't come off in that

time, you had better give it up. And now, my boy, I'm off to bed." And so saying, Mr. Pick lit his bedroom candle, and nodded good-night to his companion.

Dick Madingley sat lost in thought for some few minutes after the bookmaker's departure. He possessed considerable experience of how far an off-hand manner, unlimited assurance, and the possession of ready money will impose upon society. He was utterly unprincipled, and had for some time come to the conclusion that his first stepping-stone to fortune was to marry money. He liked Edith Molecombe, but, nice-looking girl though she was, he, nevertheless, was no whit in love with her. The question was, whether the speculation was good enough. The banker must have money, and, storm and rave though he might at the outset, yet when the thing was irrevocable he could not but forgive his only child. As for his past, Dick thought there would be not much trouble in burying that. It would be easy to ignore his present situation, and one or two of like character which he had previously held. Fool! as if the irrevocable past was not always dogging man's footsteps, and, obscure as his career may have been, rising up against him in the days of his splendour. It is no use; a man who knew you when you kept that grocery store in Islington confronts you sooner or later, when you soar to the glories of Cromwell Road.

However, this never crossed Dick's brain. He saw no further, and it was very possible to persuade Edith Molecombe to trust herself to him, and that, once married, her father's forgiveness would be a mere matter of time; and, with a firm determination to pursue his love-suit to the bitter end, Mr. Madingley followed his friend's example.

The next morning Dick, strongly advised by Mr. Pick, determined to take the bull by the horns, and, to use that worthy's expression, "have it out with his guv'nor-in-law" at once.

"Now, you know what you've got to say," said Mr. Pick. "Say it, say it strong, and then come the indignant dodge. Kicked out you'll be; that'll be the end of the first move. If the young woman means sticking to you, you'll know all about it before the week's out. Now then, off you go, and leave me to explore the beauties of Tunnleton."

Dick Madingley was blessed with plenty of nerve, and it was with the most unblushing effrontery that he knocked at the banker's door and requested to see Mr. Molecombe.

He was informed that gentleman was out, upon which Dick expressed great annoyance, and, making his way to the drawing-room, told the servant to let Miss Molecombe know that he was waiting to see her. This request the man very naturally complied with, and, having shown Mr. Madingley into the empty drawing-room, went off at once in quest of his young mistress.

A very few minutes, and then the door opened and Edith Molecombe sprang forward to greet her lover.

"Oh, Dick!" she exclaimed, "what a long time you have been away from me."

"Soothing to my vanity to think you have found it so," he replied, "but I could not get away before; business arrangements consequent on our marriage detained me; and you know, dearest, how slow lawyers are about these sort of things. But, sit down, Edith, I want to have a little serious talk with you."

"Yes," replied the girl, as she seated herself on the sofa. "You haven't bad news to tell me, have you, Dick?"

"No, nothing very bad, though I must own I'm not a little annoyed; but if you really care for me and will stick to me, I shan't so much mind."

"Why you know I will, Dick. Have not I promised?" she continued, almost in a whisper, "and do you think I'd go back from that promise?"

"No, I think I can trust you," he replied; "but during my absence a very awkward misunderstanding has arisen, it seems. Mr. John Madingley—a well-known man up in Yorkshire—has taken up his abode in Tunnleton. Because his name happens to be the same as mine, and because I rather foolishly bragged of how good an uncle of mine was to me, and what great expectations I had from him, I find all the people here have jumped to the conclusion that this Mr. John Madingley is that uncle."

"We certainly all thought you had said so, and I think papa has called twice on him. It seems he is a great invalid and sees nobody, with the exception of General Shrewster and the Enderbys."

Dick gave a slight start. "Odd!" he muttered. "Old Shrewster and that prig of a parson are the two people in Tunnleton I dislike most."

"Well, Edith," he continued aloud, "how the misunderstanding arose I don't know—I certainly never meant to say that Mr. John Madingley was my uncle. A very distant connection, no doubt he is, but the uncle to whom I owe everything is staying with me now, and rejoices in the more commonplace name of Dobson."

Edith Molecombe said nothing for two or three minutes. She felt quite certain that Dick had, upon more than one occasion, said positively that John Madingley, of Bingwell, Yorkshire, was his uncle. She knew her lover was lying, but then he was her lover, so she deliberately shut her eyes to the truth and determined to believe that she was mistaken.

"I don't see much to be disturbed about in all this. You will, of course, have to explain it to papa."

"Exactly what I had hoped to do this morning," he replied quickly; "I only heard of the rumour late last night, and came up this morning both to see you and to set your father right on this point."

"Papa may feel a little annoyed at having fallen into a mistake

—most people are—but I don't know that it is one of very great consequence."

"Ah! Edith—Edith darling. Can't you see," exclaimed Dick with well simulated passion, "that your father gave you to me under the misapprehension that I was heir to a nice estate in Yorkshire? When he finds that I only expect to inherit a more moderate income, and that my uncle, though as dear an old fellow as ever stepped, can lay claim to no particular family, I am afraid he will revoke his consent. Can I depend on you, Edith, not to give me up then, but to stand firm, and wait till time shall soften his disappointment?"

"Yes," she replied in clear resolute tones, "I promised myself to you because I loved you—of course we can't marry without something to live upon; but you won't find me grumble if we are not quite so rich as was expected."

"Thanks, my own brave girl," he replied, as he bent down and kissed her, "now I feel I can trust implicitly in you, I have no fears for the result, although I shall doubtless have to go through a stern probation as best I may. And now I am sure you will agree with me that the sooner I see your father and put a stop to this absurd rumour generally, the better."

"Yes," said Miss Molecombe, "it will be best so. I don't think you do papa quite justice. He may feel a little disappointed, just at first, but he is not the man to go back from his word on such slight grounds as those."

"You have taken quite a load off my breast; and now I must be off;" and, after again embracing his *fiancée*, Dick Madingley took his departure.

"Not a bad morning's work," he mused, as he strolled leisurely back to Tunnleton, for the banker's house, be it remembered, stood a little way outside the town. "If Edith only sticks to me, and I think she will, old Molecombe will have to give in at last. It wouldn't do to talk to her about running away just yet, but when I am presented with 'the key of the street' I shall be able to harangue on domestic tyranny, and point out that there is a period when parental oppression justifies daughters taking their lives into their own hands. It won't take very long to arrive at that stage, either."

Could Dick have been present at a little conversation in John Madingley's rooms, he would have realized that his next interview with Mr. Molecombe would probably be his last.

"I think," said General Shrewster, "it's time now, Madingley, for you to interfere. I hear this precious namesake of yours returned last night, and you really are in common justice bound to let Molecombe know that he is no relation of yours."

"I'm not quite clear I'm called upon to interfere at all in the matter; Mr. Molecombe has thought proper to identify himself with the faction here that are apparently endeavouring to make Tunnleton impossible for Maurice and his wife to live in."

"I don't think that has anything to do with it," interrupted Maurice. "I can't altogether blame Mr. Molecombe because he has thought fit to credit malicious charges brought against me; but surely, sir, it is your duty to unmask this young scoundrel, and save Miss Molecombe from such a terrible fate as her marriage with him would be."

"You go a little too fast," replied John Madingley quietly. "Just bear in mind, that, whatever we may think, all we know positively is that he is no nephew of mine."

"Perfectly true," remarked Shrewster, "but I agree with Enderby, that it is only right you should let Molecombe know that fact at once."

Thus urged, John Madingley sat down and wrote a brief note to the banker, in which he said, "that, it having come to his ears that a certain Mr. Richard Madingley, whom he understood was engaged to be married to Miss Molecombe, had stated that he was nephew and heir to him (John Madingley), he begged to inform Mr. Molecombe that the gentleman in question was no relation, and that he had never heard of his existence until he himself arrived in Tunnleton some three weeks ago."

"There," he said, "I think that meets the case; anyhow it is all I virtually know of the matter, and Mr. Molecombe must do as he thinks best on that knowledge."

"Oh! that will be quite sufficient," cried Maurice. "No father could dream of giving his daughter to a man capable of uttering such a gross falsehood as that."

"I hope you're right, Mr. Enderby," said General Shrewster, "but, mark my words, he is a precious cunning, plausible young gentleman, and I should not be the least surprised if he carried off Miss Molecombe after all. If he is the arrant adventurer I suspect him to be, Edith Molecombe's money is her great attraction in his eyes. And the tenacity with which men of this class cling to a purpose of this sort is marvellous," and then the general took up his hat and departed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FAMILY JARS.

ALTHOUGH Dick Madingley had failed to see Mr. Molecombe he was not left long in ignorance of that gentleman's decision; indeed, in the course of the day he received two notes from the banker; the first merely requested him to call the next morning on a matter of considerable importance, the second informed him that there would be no necessity to do so: that he, Mr. Molecombe, had received a communication from the Reverend John Madingley not only entirely repudiating him as a nephew, but disowning any relationship with him whatever. "As," continued the banker,

"you have persistently and distinctly always referred me to your uncle, I need scarcely say that my whole belief in your account of yourself is shaken, and you cannot be surprised at my refusing to consent to any engagement between my daughter and a man about whose antecedents I know nothing, further than that he has represented himself to me as the acknowledged heir of a gentleman who had never even heard of him until about a fortnight ago. You will therefore understand that your engagement to my daughter is at an end, as also is our acquaintance," and then the banker wound up formally with, he had "the honour to be, &c."

But Dick Madingley was not going to take his dismissal quietly. He replied to Mr. Molecombe's letter, and repeated the same specious story of a misunderstanding that he had detailed to Edith, pointed out that the uncle from whom he really had expectations, and to whom he owed everything, was now staying with him, and that if Mr. Molecombe would only consent to be introduced to Mr. Dobson he would see how the mistake arose.

But the banker's reply was very short and uncompromising; he briefly pointed out that Richard Madingley had several times deliberately stated that John Madingley was his uncle, a fact which that gentleman emphatically denied. He could not refuse to believe the latter on this point, and therefore had no alternative but to regard Mr. Richard Madingley as having wilfully misrepresented his social position, and therefore begged to decline any further intercourse with him.

"Kicked out," said Dick meditatively, as he handed the letter to his Mentor; "well, I expected that."

"Just so," replied Mr. Pick; "well, if old Molecombe won't let you in at the front door there's nothing for it but the young lady should steal out at the back. Yes, Master Dick, if you press the siege hard enough you ought to persuade her to make a bolt of it before a fortnight is out. However, I shan't be able to give you much more of my society; I have had my holiday and must be off to York races on Monday."

It was evident to the precious pair that Mr. Pick could be of no further assistance in the prosecution of this sordid love-suit; that was for Dick to pursue alone. As has been before said, he was of a bitter and vindictive nature, and he felt that it would afford him much satisfaction to laugh at the banker's beard by carrying off his daughter in the face of the curt dismissal he had received, and the fates were fighting for him in a way which, though commonplace, would not have happened in the case of a more judicious man than Mr. Molecombe. It was a sore blow to the banker's pride to think that all Tunnleton would be talking of his daughter's engagement with one whom he felt little doubt now was a mere specious adventurer, and he was foolish enough to visit his annoyance upon Edith. He delighted in painting Dick Madingley's conduct in the blackest terms. His daughter stood up

for her lover with much spirit; she had determined to believe Dick's own version of the story, and shut her eyes to what she knew to be the real state of the case. She was very much in love, and what girl under those circumstances would not stand up for her lover, let his wrong-doing be what it might?

There was much stormy converse with the twain upon this point, with the usual result, that Edith believed more strongly in her lover than ever.

To open a clandestine correspondence with Miss Molecombe was easy work for Dick, who was personally acquainted with all the dependants of the establishment, and the female servant who would not assist in the promotion of a love affair, more especially when liberally handselled, is rarely met with. Dick's passionate notes quickly found their way to their destination, and that they contained entreaties for a rendezvous need scarcely be mentioned. There were plenty of secluded walks around Tunnleton, and in these long summer afternoons there was no one to know of Edith Molecombe's coming and going. The awkward disappointment gave her an excuse for rather holding aloof from Tunnleton society for the present, and so day after day she wandered through the fields and woods with her scapegrace lover. The strong common sense that she naturally possessed would whisper to her now and then that Dick's love-tale was hardly veracious, but the glamour of her passion closed her eyes, and if she could not quite believe that it was all misunderstanding, and that he had never represented himself as the nephew of John Madingley, yet she deemed the falsehood had been perpetrated because of the great love Dick bore her.

"Even supposing," he would argue, "that I had said so, which I deny, when a fellow cares about a girl, and is just wild to call her his own, it's no great crime if he a little bounces about his position to her relations in order to carry his point. A man who is a man don't stick at trifles when he's over head and ears in love with a girl, and I don't think, Edith, I should stand at much to win you," and Miss Molecombe in her infatuation thought Richard Madingley one of the most chivalrous of men, and failed to discern the utter selfishness of his character. "Your father," continued Dick, "is behaving like a parent of the last century; he has no business to treat you in the way he is doing; it is shameful that he should play the tyrant in this bygone fashion; remember you are of age, and no parent can dictate to you on a matter of this kind."

"Oh! Dick," she cried; "I am always standing up for you; I have told papa again and again that I will not sit by and hear you abused, and I intend to stand to my promise, and will marry nobody but you."

"You are a dear, good girl," he replied, "and if your father cannot be brought to listen to reason we shall have to take the

law into our own hands. I want you for yourself, darling, and not merely because your father can make you a handsome allowance if he chooses."

"I don't quite understand you, Dick, but I couldn't marry you without papa's consent, I couldn't indeed! I will be true to you, but we must wait; he will come round in time."

"By all means," rejoined Dick, "give him time, though it is hardly fair to expect us to waste our lives because he happened to misunderstand what I said—but never mind, darling, I know you're true as steel, and as long as that is the case I will bear this injustice as best I may."

It was ingeniously put; Dick Madingley was posing before his *fiancée* as the victim of cruel injustice. He drew her closer to him, and as they strolled leisurely down a briar-scented lane a more loverlike couple could scarcely have been seen; and this was precisely the view that a tall muscular young man, who had just reached a stile leading into the lane some thirty or forty yards behind them, took of affairs.

Maurice Enderby, for it was he, paused ere he mounted the stile. He recognized the couple before him at a glance, and had no wish to intrude upon them, but he felt sorely puzzled as to what he ought to do under the circumstances. He knew, as did all Tunnton, by this time, that Mr. Molecombe had withdrawn his consent to Edith's marriage; he believed, as did many other people, that Richard Madingley was an impostor; still it was perfectly clear that Miss Molecombe had not given him up and did not share that opinion. Maurice Enderby sat for some time on that stile thinking what he should do. It did not require much knowledge of the world to know how clandestine meetings with an unprincipled scamp like Dick Madingley would terminate. He could not bear the idea of any girl becoming the prey of a reckless adventurer such as Dick. He could not stand still and see Edith Molecombe, in a moment of madness, consign herself to life-long misery. But how was he to interfere? It was a very delicate matter to touch upon. He might communicate his discovery to Mr. Molecombe, and throw that gentleman into a perfect tempest of indignation, but it struck Maurice that would be more likely to precipitate an elopement than avert it. In vain did Maurice cudgel his brains; he could think of no other means of interfering except through the medium of Edith's father, and he felt instinctively that would produce more harm than good. In the meantime the lovers had got well out of sight, and he could now pursue his way home. Maurice felt that he should very much like to take counsel with somebody as to what he had best do—but with whom? Most decidedly he did not wish his discovery blazoned abroad. Should he confide the matter to General Shrewster, and take his advice on the subject? He was a clear-headed man and not given to babble; however, he was not

destined to require the general's services upon this occasion ; for, to his great delight, on arriving at his own house, he found Bob Grafton chatting merrily over the tea-table with Mrs. Enderby, and it flashed across him that a thorough man of the world like Grafton was just the very man to take into his confidence.

Grafton was in high spirits ; news and gossip of every kind fell from his lips. He touched on pretty well everything that was talked about—musically, politically, socially, and wound up by congratulating Mrs. Enderby with mock gravity upon her successful *début* as an owner of race-horses. Bessie's face became serious directly.

"Don't jest about that, please, Mr. Grafton. There is no denying we have been very fortunate, and that the money has been a great boon to us ; but I can't help feeling that it is an ill-omened present, as we shall discover in the end."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Enderby ! There can be no harm in what you do ; indeed, as a matter of fact you don't win it ; you've the luck to possess a jolly old uncle who gives you half *his* winnings, which he can well afford to do. I only wish I had an uncle so charged with right feeling. And now I must say good-bye ; it's a good stretch back to Bridge Court."

"I'll walk part of the way with you, Bob," said Maurice, as he took up his hat, and the pair descended the stairs together. "I want your advice on a rather ticklish point," he continued, when they found themselves outside the door. And then Maurice told the whole story of Dick Madingley's arrival in Tunnleton, how he had proclaimed himself nephew and heir of John Madingley, had become engaged to a young lady of the place, and how that when John Madingley himself appeared on the scene he had utterly repudiated all knowledge of his namesake.

Grafton listened with great attention and no little amusement. "What a precious young scamp !" he exclaimed, as Maurice finished, "and by Jove ! what a sell for him John Madingley turning up at the finish ! However, of course that burst him up, and his matrimonial speculation is all over now."

"That is just what it isn't," rejoined Maurice. "Molecombe broke off his daughter's engagement, and turned this young gentleman out of the house with the utmost promptitude. But the fellow still lingers in the place, as I happened to discover to-day, and is still making clandestine love to Miss Molecombe. Now this is what I want to consult you about. I don't wish to meddle, I don't desire to make a scandal. If I inform her father——"

"Oh, nonsense !" interrupted Bob energetically ; "from your description of him, he would lock her up, and then she would be off before twenty-four hours were over her head. No, there's only one way out of a thing like this. We must deal with Dick Madingley. We must either bounce him out of Tunnleton, or buy him, but I think we can manage to do the former. You

must know that when I came down the beginning of the week my attention was attracted by one of my two fellow-travellers. The man's face haunted me. I knew I had seen it before, and under unpleasant circumstances. Rather to my surprise, they both got out at Tunnleton, and the porter told me that the younger man of the two was Mr. Richard Madingley. The name brought it all back to me. I recollected my man then. It was a Mr. Pick, a leg who was strongly suspected of being actively engaged in the laming of a horse of John Madingley's at Epsom. Like most of these cases, it couldn't be proved, but of one thing there was no doubt, that nobody benefited by that mare's accident so largely as Mr. Pick, and from the heavy amount he had betted against her it seemed as if he had foreseen the accident that befell her at the eleventh hour."

"Still, although that is very corroborative of the opinion I have formed of Dick Madingley, I don't see how that is going to help us."

"It's not at all a bad card, my dear Maurice, in the game of bounce that we are about to play; that this young gentleman should be entertaining such a known scoundrel as Pick speaks volumes against him; besides, didn't you tell me that he swaggered a good deal about an uncle who is staying with him whom he asserted to be the uncle who owned the gold-mine, or whatever he chose to call it. Now I take it half Tunnleton could tell you who has been staying with Mr. Richard Madingley this week, and if it turns out, as I think it quite likely it may do, that this thief Pick, the bookmaker, has been posing as that wealthy relative, then, my boy, we've got the ace of trumps in our hand, and now good-bye. I'll be with you to lunch to-morrow, and we'll snuff our young friend out as soon as we have made the necessary inquiries."

CHAPTER XXVII.

NOTICE TO QUIT.

THE morrow was rather an eventful day with Maurice Enderby. In the first place John Madingley took his departure; he was extremely cordial in his farewell both to Bessie and her husband. "I'll give you what help I can, my lad," he said as he bade Maurice good-bye, "in whatever you turn your hand to; but you're no more fit to be a parson than I was, though when they come to tot up my ledger they'll find I've been a good deal better clergyman than they give me credit for; but remember, things were very different when I began, and what was thought no harm in a parson doing in my younger days is looked upon in quite another light now. You're in the wrong groove, my boy; take an old man's advice, think very seriously before you are ordained priest, and remember if you want a little money to start in another line I dare say I can manage to find it for you." A warm kiss to Bessie, a hearty wrench of the

hand to Maurice Enderby, and old John Madingley was speeding once more towards his northern home.

"I hope you've a decent lunch for Grafton," said Maurice to his wife, as they strolled home from the station.

"Don't throw doubts upon my housekeeping," replied Bessie laughing, "the fatted calf has been killed for Mr. Grafton, and I don't think you'll have anything to complain of."

Bob Grafton turned up in due course, and did due justice to Mrs. Enderby's preparations; but no sooner was their meal disposed of, and they were left by Bessie to their own devices, than he at once plunged into the midst of things.

"I've asked a question here and there about Tunnleton this morning, and gathered a fact or two that will be useful to us. Only one person has stayed with Richard Madingley since he established himself here, that was his uncle, Mr. Dobson, who left again some two or three mornings ago. I've no earthly doubt that Mr. Pick and Mr. Dobson are identical, though what object Mr. Pick had in posing as this young man's uncle I don't know. I can imagine a score of good reasons for his changing his name. He may be veritably his uncle for all I know, but we've this fact to go upon, his relative is well known as a thoroughly unscrupulous book-maker, and is masquerading down here under an assumed name. The conclusion is obvious; he is known to have given utterance to a most mendacious statement regarding his kinship to John Madingley. You have fair grounds, therefore, for supposing that he is also down here under false colours. And now comes the question of how are we to put the screw on. What I propose is this, that you and I walk down to see him, tell him briefly, but sternly, that we give him forty-eight hours to clear out of Tunnleton, and that if he has not disappeared in that time you will feel it your duty to lay the facts that have come to your knowledge before the committee of the club."

"And suppose," replied Maurice, "he simply laughs at us, and tells us to do our worst?"

"Then hold your tongue and let me talk to him. You see, if what we know really *was* put before a committee of the club, they would feel bound to make him substantiate his social position. What scoundrels he may choose to know is no business of theirs, but doubts having arisen they have a right to insist upon his vindicating himself and show them that he is a gentleman and not a mere adventurer who has crept into their midst under false colours."

"And you think it possible, Bob, to keep Miss Molecombe's name out of the business altogether?"

"No, honestly, I don't; we will do our best; but an unprincipled blackguard like that is pretty certain to introduce it, even if he gives in and we carry our point; he is sure to spit all the venom he can; and look here, Maurice, you used to be able to hit terribly hard with the gloves when you were a freshman, and probably will

be sorely tempted to knock Mr. Richard Madingley down before our interview is over. Mind, you must keep your temper. And now, the sooner we tackle this gentleman in his own den the better."

Mr. Richard Madingley, having made an excellent luncheon, was ruminating how things stood with him in Tunnleton. He was quite conscious that they were beginning to look askew at him at the club. They had no doubt there about his having represented himself to be John Madingley's nephew, and they were equally aware from General Shrewster that John Madingley had most clearly denied all relationship during his brief visit to Tunnleton. People who had opened their houses freely to Dick Madingley began now to repent their precipitation. Some few crusty old members, who had not benefited by Dick's hospitality, were already whispering that "the fellow ought never to have been let in here, the committee are not half particular enough in their scrutiny." Let people once conceive a suspicion that you have deceived them, and that you are not what you represented yourself to be, and it is wonderful how willing they are to go into the other extreme, and believe any wild story to your detriment.

Dick felt that opinion was against him in Tunnleton. He could not but notice that many of his fair acquaintances, who had previously quite courted a bow from him, now seemed a little anxious to avoid meeting him, and when they did the old smiling salute degenerated into a frigid bend.

"Yes," he mused, "the game's about up here; well, it has served my turn very well, and I don't know that even the finish of it is not another trick in my favour! The question of settlements would have been a rock I must have split upon; my only chance would have been to run away with Edith, and old Molecombe's angry breaking-off of our engagement only makes it easier to win her consent to that step. A few days more, and I've no doubt I shall get her to agree to it." But here Dick Madingley's reflections were somewhat rudely interrupted by an intimation from Phillips that Mr. Enderby wished to see him.

"Mr. Enderby!" exclaimed Dick in great astonishment.

"Yes, sir," replied Phillips; "he and another gentleman, I don't know his name, but he's often about Tunnleton, I believe; stops a good deal at Bridge Court, sir."

"Show them up to the drawing-room, Phillips, and say I'll be with them in two or three minutes. Enderby," he muttered, "now what can he want with me? I hate him and don't suppose he has much liking for me. What can he have got to say to me? As for the story about John Madingley, why all the town knows it by this time, he can't have come with that precious discovery to me. And I don't think," said Dick meditatively, "he can possibly have found out anything else; however, here goes."

When Dick entered the drawing-room, Maurice Enderby saluted him with a formal bow, introduced the stranger who accompanied

him as his friend Mr. Grafton, and then, without further preface he continued :

"I need scarcely say, Mr. Madingley, that nothing but a matter of urgent importance would have justified this intrusion, but if you will only listen to me patiently for a few minutes I will endeavour to be as brief as possible over a most unpleasant business," and then, in pithy logical sequence, Maurice stated the facts with which we are already acquainted, and concluded by saying that all these things threw such grave doubts on the minds of both himself and his friend that he had no alternative but to make them public.

"And do you suppose, Mr. Enderby, that I feel called upon to inform you of all the details of my family history, of where I usually live, who are my intimate acquaintances, &c."

"No," replied Maurice, "that will be for the information of the club committee, and, as for family details, I can only trust that you will be rather more fortunate as regards uncles than you have been so far."

The shot told. A savage scowl passed across Dick Madingley's face, and he muttered something, of which "meddlesome parsons" was all that was audible. Bob Grafton, who had watched him keenly from the beginning of Maurice's statement, had noted, coolly though Dick took it, his slight start at the mention of Mr. Pick; he also noted the slightly nervous twitch with which he heard the threat of placing his case before the club committee. "That fellow will shut up when the pinch comes," thought Grafton.

"I have very little doubt, Mr. Enderby," rejoined Dick, with a sneer, "you are intimately acquainted with the members of the betting ring. It is not often that any gentleman manifests your interest in turf matters who is not in the habit of doing business with that fraternity. I am not aware that you ever saw my Uncle Dobson, but, even if you did, an accidental likeness to an unknown betting man hardly warrants the assertion that he is a supposititious relation."

Maurice hesitated for a moment, but Grafton now cut into the conversation in quiet resolute fashion that somewhat awed Dick Madingley.

"Oh, no!" he said, "we don't make mistakes of that kind. I'm a racing man myself, and have known Mr. Pick by sight ever since he nobbled Marietta for the Oaks seven years ago. I travelled down from London in the same carriage with you and him ten days ago, and know perfectly well he passed in Tunnleton as your Uncle Dobson. Never had anybody else staying with you, you know, since you've been in Tunnleton. Can't be any mistake about it, you see."

"And what the devil have you got to do with it, I should like to know?" demanded Dick fiercely. "By what right do you interfere?"

"Right!" exclaimed Grafton, with a short laugh. "By the right that men put welshers out of the inclosure of the race-course, by the right that all men have to defend their brethren from

fraud, by the acknowledged right and duty of every man to expose a swindler!"

"And you dare say this to me!" cried Dick, with a voice hoarse with passion.

"Yes," chimed in Maurice, "we not only say it, but, as Grafton says, it's our duty to say it. For the sake of some of those who have weakly trusted you, who have weakly welcomed you to their homes, and to whom this exposure must be a source of bitter shame, we are willing to hush it up as far as may be. Give us your word to leave Tunnleton within eight-and-forty hours, and we will stay our hands for that time; but after that remember everything we know is laid before the club committee, and your exposure is imminent."

"You may do as you like about that," rejoined Madingley, "I am quite willing to court investigation, and shall bring an action for libel against the pair of you to boot."

"No, you won't," chimed in Grafton, "we are not going to be frightened by brag, and you don't mean fighting. You'll be out of Tunnleton in forty-eight hours."

"Do you know, sir," rejoined Dick, with inimitable assurance, "that I am engaged to be married to Miss Molecombe, and that——"

"Her father kicked you out of the house a few days ago. Yes, we know all about that, and it is to avoid such annoyances as this that we suggest that you should leave Tunnleton quietly and at once—but leave Tunnleton you will, or find yourself cut by the whole community."

For a few minutes Dick reflected in dogged silence, then he said:

"Remember, I in no wise acknowledge that the allegations you make against me are true, although perhaps there is just that suspicion of truth in them that makes them difficult to disprove; but, gentlemen, my feelings are deeply involved as regards Miss Molecombe, and I utterly decline to leave Tunnleton for another week."

"Ha! in order that you may continue your clandestine meetings with that foolish girl," interposed Maurice hotly. "No, Mr. Madingley; forty-eight hours is the outside we give you, and I honestly believe that is twenty-four too long."

Dick looked at him for a moment.

"I suppose," he said with an evil sneer, "that in the interests of morality you consider it necessary to keep strict espionage over your flock. I have heard of such shepherds, but never saw one of the dirty creatures before. You have been doing me the honour, I presume, of dogging my footsteps lately."

For an instant Maurice's fist clenched, his eyes flashed, the veins in his forehead stood out, and it was the veriest toss-up whether Dick Madingley measured his length on the carpet or

not; but a "Steady, old man!" from Grafton turned the scale, and with a mighty effort Maurice mastered his temper.

"I happened to see you walking with Miss Molecombe yesterday, and knowing, as indeed all Tunnleton knows, that her father had forbidden all intercourse between you, I don't scruple to say that such conduct on your part will make gossip all too busy with her name."

"Never mind going into all that," broke in Grafton, "it is quite beside the point. Mr. Madingley thoroughly understands us—we give him forty-eight hours to leave the place quietly. After that, we do our best to unmask an adventurer. No; you needn't talk about libel—we'll chance that. Come along, Maurice, I don't think we need detain Mr. Madingley any longer; he quite understands us."

"I shall take my own course," blustered Dick.

"Just so," rejoined Grafton; "which will be a ticket to London by an early train to-morrow. Good morning."

Dick Madingley vouchsafed not the slightest notice of their salutation, and, when the pair were outside the house, Maurice exclaimed:

"Thank heaven we are through with that. I never was so sorely tempted to inflict personal chastisement as I was a few minutes ago."

"No, I know, old man; but it would have weakened our game terribly, and a summons for assault is always an awkward thing for one of your profession. He's going right enough, never fear; but you were right in one thing: we ought not to have given him more than twenty-four hours; he's a vindictive, mischievous cur, that, and, mark me, Maurice, if by any fluke he ever has a chance of squaring accounts with you he will do it; but he's a plausible beggar, and there's no saying what he mayn't persuade Miss Molecombe to do in the time we've given him; however, we may console ourselves with one thing: if a young woman in these days is bent upon marrying the wrong man she will do it sooner or later in spite of everybody. I turn off here, so must say good-bye. I leave Bridge Court in two or three days now, and if you happen to want me *in re* Madingley you know my London address."

Maurice Enderby walked home musing over his interview with Dick Madingley. He had done the best he could think of to prevent Edith Molecombe falling into the hands of the audacious adventurer who had ensnared her affections, but he was forced to admit that Grafton was right, and that, let the girl's father and friends do what they would, it must depend very much upon whether Edith could be brought to see the utter worthlessness of her lover. On one point of the interview Maurice looked back regretfully, and a faint smile played round his mouth as he muttered:

"No, I don't think I am suited to the profession. Ah, if I hadn't been a parson how I would have knocked that fellow down!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HER HEART FAILED HER.

DICK MADINGLEY paced the drawing-room for a good half-hour after his visitors left him. He had decided before their coming that it behoved him to quit Tunnleton very shortly, and, except for Edith Molecombe, it would suit him just as well to leave the day after to-morrow as a week or two later; he would not see Edith this afternoon, as he was well aware that she had an engagement that would prevent her meeting him, and further, she had told him that she must inevitably be discovered if their meetings were too frequent. She was to see him to-morrow, and the question was, should he be able to persuade her to elope with him on the following day? Dick had a pretty genius for intrigue; no, he would not go by the morning train, for that was the train which Tunnleton chiefly affected, for the obvious reason that it gave them a long day in town; no, he would go by the mid-day train, and, if he could persuade Edith to come with him, well, he would take her; they must not go together, and he thought if Edith travelled up second-class and closely veiled she would run little risk of recognition; he would get her ticket for her and contrive to slip it into her hand as she passed into the station; once there she must stick closely to the ladies' room till the train came in, and then, if she slipped quickly into her carriage, he thought in the confusion she would escape all observation. Would he be able to persuade her to this step so abruptly? Dick Madingley had great confidence in his power over the girl; if that confounded parson had only given him another week or ten days he would have had no fears as to the result, but most girls are startled at the idea when such a step is first proposed to them. Dick knew this, and though by no means troubled with diffidence, felt that he might not succeed.

Grafton read him truly; he might bluster about what he was going to do, but Dick Madingley knew a good deal better than to risk an inquiry into his social status by any of the Tunnleton people. No, he would settle the few bills he owed in the town that afternoon, for Dick was not an adventurer of the petty sort that swindles the tradespeople of the place in which they conduct their campaign; he flew at higher game than that, and, but for the inopportune appearance of John Madingley on the scene, would probably have won the prize for which he strove. This aim, just now, was a wealthy marriage, and in Edith Molecombe he imagined he had found a young lady who must eventually come into a good bit of money, and whose father, if he liked, could behave very handsomely to her at present. He might have had to run away with her in any case, but he would have figured in a very different light before Tunnleton had his imposition

regarding John Madingley not been discovered. Yes, if ever a man of his temperament had a debt to settle with another he had with Maurice Enderby, and he vowed that, should the chance ever come, Mr. Enderby should be paid in full. Curiously enough his animosity was but slightly roused as regarded Grafton, but his antipathy to Maurice was of long standing and had increased in intensity day by day: this was the culmination of it, and Dick Madingley was not likely to be very scrupulous should he ever see his way to revenge.

Dick Madingley had been sitting on the stile leading into Kilroe Wood a good half-hour, and was beginning to wonder whether Edith would keep her appointment, when a light step behind him caught his ear, and, in another moment, Miss Molecombe was by his side.

"I am very sorry I am late, Dick, but I had a good deal of difficulty to get here at all. I can't help thinking they suspect something; papa said last night that he could not think what you were still hanging about Tunnleton for, a place in which, he said, you were utterly discredited, and further added that if he for one moment thought it were on my account he would pack me off to my aunt in Wales, and then, as usual, we came to high words, which ended in my flouncing out of the room and having a good cry upstairs."

"It is as I thought, darling," replied Mr. Madingley, "your father is commencing to play the domestic tyrant. As long as you stand to me, you will be continually talked at. It is too much to ask of any girl to bear that. Better tell your father at once, dear, that you give me up, and then they would let you alone."

"You don't mean it, Dick, you can't; you know I wouldn't give you up."

"I think perhaps it would be best for you, dearest. I must leave this to-morrow, and though as long as there is a hope of winning your hand I shall be true, yet it is trying you too hard to hold you to your engagement. Tell your father it is broken."

"Dick! Dick, don't think so meanly of me; do you think I cannot wait and suffer patiently for your sake?" and Edith thought how unselfish and chivalrous her lover was in endeavouring to make their parting as easy as possible for her.

"Yes, it must be so," replied Madingley. "It will be sad and dreary work for me, but there is no alternative, unless——" and here he paused abruptly, with apparent confusion.

"Unless what?" she exclaimed anxiously.

"Nothing, nothing. Don't ask me: I never ought to have said what I did; forget those last two or three words."

"No, I claim to hear what you were about to suggest," replied Edith; "if there is any other course open to us, I've a right to decide whether I will take it."

At first Dick Madingley positively refused to explain himself, but gradually the specious impostor allowed Edith to draw from him that she might be freed from all annoyances and their mutual

happiness secured if she could make up her mind to run away with him the next morning.

At first Edith was frightened out of her life at the bare suggestion, but gradually as Dick unfolded his scheme, and pointed out to her the extreme simplicity of it, she began to listen to him, and before they parted she had pledged herself to meet him at the Tunnleton Station, and elope with him by the midday train, and then Miss Molecombe scampered home with a heightened pulse and a heart beating with unnatural rapidity.

If Edith wanted any strengthening in her resolution it was administered to her that night. Business at the bank had gone a little awry; it was not that anything serious had occurred, but an unpleasant mistake had been made with regard to one of their best customers' accounts, and the customer in question, who was a wealthy and irascible man, had gone the length of blowing up Mr. Molecombe in his own bank parlour about the carelessness of his subordinates. That Mr. Molecombe had passed that on, and made things pretty lively all round for the subordinates in question, it is almost needless to add, but unluckily he had not wholly worked off his irritation at his place of business, and poured forth the remnant of his wrath on his own family. Having pronounced the cook utterly incompetent, and marvelled why Mrs. Molecombe continued to keep a woman so incapable of cooking a mutton chop, having informed his butler that he was an idiot, who, after many years' experience, seemed to know less about what should be the proper temperature of the wine than a charity school-boy, he, when the servants withdrew, commenced to talk *at* his daughter, perhaps the most exasperating form of attack: he said nothing to Edith, and poured forth a flood of ridicule and abuse to his wife on the subject of Dick Madingley. At last Edith, springing to her feet, exclaimed, with flashing and tear-stained eyes, that she would bear it no longer, that she believed none of these lies that were circulated about Mr. Madingley, and that even if they were true he might recollect that with his own consent Dick Madingley had been affianced to her for weeks. That she had given him her love, and, come what might, she would not sit still and hear him thrown stones at. "I can bear these taunts no longer, and sooner than continue to endure them I shall seek a home elsewhere."

"You had better seek your pillow at once, Miss," replied Mr. Molecombe furiously, "and as for the home, if this is not good enough for you, I'll make arrangements for you to reside with your aunt in Wales. The scenery is magnificent, and as for society I believe there are the goats," concluded Mr. Molecombe with grim irony.

"Good-night, mamma," said Edith in a low tone, and without even glancing at her father she quickly left the room.

Mrs. Molecombe was a rather weak woman and stood in no little awe of her domineering husband, but she loved her daughter

dearly, and no sooner had the door closed than she took up the cudgels on her behalf.

"You are too hard upon her, Alick, you are indeed," she exclaimed; "the girl has met with a bitter disappointment and is naturally very sore at heart. Why cannot you give the wound time to heal? Why will you not suffer her to do her best to forget him? You don't know the suffering you inflict. You don't know that when a girl has given her heart away what a desert life seems to her when she is told that her lover is worthless and that she must give him up."

"Confound it, woman," rejoined Mr. Molecombe, in milder tones and with no little contrition for his past ill-temper, "you don't mean to say that it was my fault we did not discover this Madingley was a liar and a scoundrel sooner."

"No, Alick; but cannot you understand that alluding to her lover's iniquities is dropping nitric acid into Edith's wounds? Pray, pray, leave the subject alone before her. Don't let the name of Richard Madingley ever pass your lips."

"Well, well, perhaps I'm wrong, but the whole thing, you know, has been so deuced disagreeable. I am quite the laughing-stock of the town, and then Edith makes me mad by standing up for the young villain; but I'll do my best, I'll try not to say anything about him before Edith, and if, as I hope, he clears out of Tunnleton before many days are over, that will make it all the easier."

The banker lingered over his breakfast the next morning in the hope of making friends with his daughter, but Edith's maid reported that her mistress was suffering from a bad headache, and wanted nothing but a cup of tea in her own room. Mr. Molecombe of course went up to see her, but Edith declared she was suffering chiefly from the effects of a bad night and only wanted quiet and to be let alone. She had made up her mind that this would be her best chance of escaping all observation; it was easy enough to get out of the house and make her way to the station, but the difficulty was to carry a hand-bag with her; more baggage she dared not attempt, but even that little would attract attention should any of the servants catch sight of her departure. Once clear of the house, and the getting to the station by roads by which she was not likely to meet acquaintances was easy. In due course she rang for her maid and dressed, then ordered a cup of strong beef-tea and desired not to be disturbed till luncheon time. A quarter of an hour afterwards, and, closely veiled, hot though the weather was, with her dressing-bag in her hand, she stole down the back stairs into the garden; a light shawl thrown carelessly over her arm veiled the dressing-bag. One piece of lawn dangerously open to observation was safely crossed, and then Edith plunged into the shrubberies and felt safe. No chance of meeting any one now, unless it was some under-gardener. No. She felt the perils of her enterprize were over until she arrived in the purlieus of Tunnleton Station.

Edith passed into the booking-office unnoticed, and then stood irresolute, not knowing how to act. She glanced at the clock, and saw there was a quarter of an hour yet before the train was due. Had she better take her ticket while the office was as yet uncrowded, or leave the obtaining of it to Dick?

While she still hesitated a voice whispered in her ear:

"Go into the waiting-room at once; don't come out till the bell rings, and then jump as quickly as possible into the nearest carriage," while at the same time she felt her ticket slipped into her hand.

Without turning her head she made her way into the waiting-room as directed, and there, in a state of some trepidation, awaited the signal of the coming train. A few minutes and the bell rang out its warning for passengers to take their seats. Grasping her dressing-bag, Edith made her way swiftly to the platform; but as she crossed the threshold stopped paralyzed, for there, not half a score paces from her, stood her father in animated conversation with some gentleman, whom he was apparently seeing off to London. To reach her part of the train she must pass close to him, and she could hardly hope that he would not instantly recognize her. Her heart failed her, she shrank back again into the waiting-room, intent only on escaping her father's recognition.

Dick Madingley had been also terribly discomposed by the appearance of the banker. He judged it wisest to attract as little attention to himself as possible, and, therefore, instead of lingering, as he had intended, to see Edith emerge from the waiting-room, he got into his carriage and took a seat on the far side from the window. Another two or three minutes and they were off, and Madingley was left to wonder the whole way up whether his *fiancée* had effected her escape.

"It could hardly have been a mere chance," he muttered; "this is some of Enderby's work, I'll be bound. I've no doubt he or his creatures have dogged my every footstep; he doubtless bribed some one of my servants to know by what train I was going to town, and put old Molecombe up to seeing me off. His taking his stand where he did was probably accident, but there he was like a terrier at a rabbit-hole. I don't suppose Edith is in the train; she is a clever and a plucky girl if she managed to get past him."

On his arrival in London, Mr. Madingley speedily convinced himself that his surmise was correct, and, with a furious malediction on Maurice Enderby, he drove off to the scene of his usual avocations.

In supposing that the banker's appearance at the station was due to Maurice Enderby, Dick Madingley was mistaken. It was the result of pure accident. The irascible customer of the day before had called in to have a little more talk with Mr. Molecombe of a less fiery description, and, not having been able to quite finish his say and being at the same time anxious to catch the

London train, the banker had walked down to the station with him in order to finish their discussion.

His client off, Mr. Molecombe at once turned his back upon the railway and retraced his steps to the bank. But Edith had no more idea of this than her lover: Conscience-stricken, she thought her premeditated elopement had been discovered, and sat trembling in the most retired corner of the waiting-room, expecting every instant to see her father enter in search of her. When a quarter-of-an-hour had elapsed, and she saw no sign of any one in quest of her, she ventured to peep once more cautiously out of the door. The platform was nearly deserted; except for a boy cutting papers at the bookstall and a grimy gentleman assiduously engaged in cleaning lamps, there was no one visible. The very porters were all over on the other side of the line, awaiting the down train.

Edith began to recover her courage. Whatever caused her father's presence there, it was possible, could she only regain her home unnoticed, that her escapade of this morning might be kept a secret. Fortune favoured her, and she regained her own room unnoticed, some quarter-of-an-hour before luncheon, without any one suspecting that she had been beyond the shrubberies.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"THE SPOTTED DOG."

TUNNLETON was quite in a ferment during the next day or two. The Torkeslys, the Prauns, and the Maddoxes were much excited about the sudden departure of Richard Madingley.

"Given up his house, by Jove!" said General Maddox in his usual deliberate tones; "paid off all his servants, and has cleared off without beat of drum; hasn't left a P.P.C. card anywhere that I can hear. Looks queer, sir. Gad, I don't believe that fellow was quite right after all!"

"Right, Maddox!" replied the irascible Praun, who was always in extremes, and who flew from one view to a diametrically opposite one, quickly as the wind flies round the compass, "I have no doubt he was the most confounded impostor that ever put foot in the place. Took us all in, damn his impudence!"

"Very disgraceful, Praun," replied General Maddox, shaking his head; "though, to do him justice, he did give good dinners."

"Yes," replied the other; "and, scoundrel though he was," a remark, by the way, for which General Praun had very scant justification, "I should like to know, before he is hung, where he got his after-dinner sherry; but I don't know what's coming to us: the place is getting turned topsy-turvy; what do you think I passed on my way here? Mrs. Enderby, if you please, driving a carriage and a pair of ponies. Now I hate gossip; I don't want to meddle in my neighbour's affairs, but when you see a phenomenon, such

as a curate setting up his carriage and pair, one can't help asking how he does it."

"Livery stable, probably," rejoined General Maddox; "trap for the day, you know; two ponies, though? Quite beyond his means," concluded the general, with a shake of his head.

"Means!" cried Praun; "nothing is beyond the means of a gambler while he is in luck. How Jarrow can reconcile it to his conscience, how Tunnleton can submit to a parson within its midst, who, instead of attending to his duties, is devoted to speculating on the turf, passes my comprehension!" and in good truth for the next few days the backslidings of Richard Madingley and Maurice Enderby divided the attention of the town.

But for all that there are not wanting in any community worshippers of the rising sun. To these worldly people that Mrs. Enderby should have turned out a veritable niece of John Madingley and have set up her pony-carriage were signs indicative of coming prosperity that they deemed unwise to neglect. They reminded each other that the Enderbys, although they had said nothing, had always held strictly aloof from Richard Madingley's entertainments: in fact a slight reaction was already setting in in Maurice's favour, although the two generals had by no means abandoned their hostile attitude.

But now that fatal wedding gift once more began to haunt Maurice, once more to send the blood dancing through his veins, once more aroused visions of a broad, green-ribboned turf, white rails, silken jackets, and half a score of horses tearing up "the straight" at full speed. Doncaster meeting commenced in a few days; the sporting papers were, so far, nearly unanimous in predicting that the "Wandering Nun" would win the Champagne Stakes, and, strive to banish it from his mind though he might, it was all no use, and Maurice Enderby was once more feverishly anxious about the result of the race. He had not dared to ask Grafton to telegraph to him again, although he knew that gentleman would be at Doncaster. The *employés* at the telegraph office are not altogether reticent about the messages that pass through their hands, and it was pretty well known through Tunnleton that Mr. Enderby had been the first man in the town to know of the "Wandering Nun's" victory at Goodwood.

Generals Maddox and Praun could hardly be blamed for holding that Maurice speculated on the turf, for it would be very difficult to have persuaded the Tunnleton people generally of that, and while the respectable part of the community regarded a betting clergyman as an anomaly that could not be suffered in these days, there was a minor and godless section who had much admiration for Mr. Enderby's astuteness. It is hard to stem the tide of calumny, more especially when such calumny is based on such apparent grounds as there were in Maurice's case. His own acts too combined strongly to strengthen the prevalent belief, the interest

he had manifested in racing, the telegram, his sudden command of money, and, last not least, what his enemies in Tunnleton termed his arrogance and effrontery in setting up a carriage and pair of ponies.

Most of us have some few sworn friends who will stand by us unflinchingly should disaster overtake us, who, if unable to assist us in our trouble, we know will always meet us with sincere sympathy and a hearty hand-grip; there are others who, though loyal enough in the first instance, begin to waver as the tide runs high, who begin to calculate and doubt whether they are prudent in championing what looks like a lost cause. Politic and rather timid people some of these, willing to take our part in the first instance, but afraid that it may be to their own detriment to continue their partizanship when they find the clouds of popular opinion are gathering thickly around us. Now this was rather Mr. Jarrow's case; he had stood stanchly by Maurice in the first instance, but even that had not been friendship, but his natural obstinacy, combined with much indignation that men like Generals Maddox and Praun should venture to interfere in affairs of his. But he was beginning now to waver in his belief in his curate; evidence continued apparently to accumulate against Mr. Enderby, and that Tunnleton gave credence to such evidence was unmistakable. Maurice too declined any explanation, and, except to the rector, had hardly condescended to deny the accusation brought against him. Mr. Jarrow began to think that it behoved Maurice at least to refute the charge to the utmost extent of his power. He, the rector, in his interview with Generals Maddox and Praun had actually blustered about bringing an action for libel, and yet Maurice sat down supinely under the scandal, and made no effort to remove the taint from his name. The rector was of a pugnacious disposition, and never happy unless engaged in a wordy war with somebody, and it was wormwood to him that Maurice, by the attitude he had taken, precluded all continuance of his quarrel with the two generals.

In good truth, ever since Grafton had put the idea into his head, which John Madingley had considerably strengthened, Maurice had been weighing in his mind the propriety of his giving up the Church. He had tried it, and, though he had conscientiously performed his duties, still he felt he was in no wise fitted for the profession. He had taken to it as a means of living, but before seeking ordination as priest he felt that a man should have some higher feeling regarding it than that, and now he was once more bitten by the turf fever, and, do what he would, could not keep the "Champagnes" out of his head. The success of the "Wandering Nun" was not the great object which it had been to him when she secured her first victory; he was no longer pressed for money, but nobody exists in such affluent circumstances as not to be very well pleased at the idea of having a little more of that useful commodity. Still it was not so much that, as was the

interest he took in the career of the flying filly; and if it had not made a penny difference to him he would have been still as deeply interested in the issue of her forthcoming essay at Doncaster.

The next two or three days slipped by, and at last came the opening day of the great Yorkshire meeting, and Maurice knew that at three o'clock this race, the winner of which so often made his mark in turf history, was to be decided. As the afternoon wore on he could no longer control his restlessness. They must know it in the town now, the telegram must have arrived at the club, but he did not wish to make any further scandal. He supposed he must wait till he got his paper the next morning, but he was resolute not to look in at the club for fear of what might be said as to his reason for coming there.

He wandered aimlessly about the town till in an evil moment his vagrant footsteps brought him outside a second-class hotel called "The Spotted Dog." He knew this house by repute, he knew it bore the reputation of being a sporting-house, and he had heard some of the young men at the club declare that they knew what had won a big race at "The Spotted Dog" always a quarter of an hour sooner than anywhere else in Tunnleton. In an evil moment he resolved just to step in and ask the question. He cast a hurried glance up and down the street, but there were not many people moving about, and nobody he knew was in sight. He ran up the three or four steps and glanced rapidly round for some one of whom to make inquiries. A small knot of rather raffish-looking young men were gathered in front of the bar, and one of these saved him all further trouble.

"There you are, sir," he said, pointing to the tissue fastened up in the bar window, "won in a canter; that 'Wandering Nun' is about the best bit of stuff Mr. Brooks ever owned."

Maurice bent his head in acknowledgment of the speaker's civility, and retreated rapidly into the street, which he gained just in time to receive a frigid bow from Miss Torkesly, just issuing from a shop on the other side of the road. Maurice knew all was over as he raised his hat. He felt that Tunnleton would never tolerate this fresh iniquity, that he would be cast out from among them. That question of resigning the Church was being much simplified, as he could not but think, looking back upon his imprudence. There was much likelihood of the Church resigning him. It was well that it was a nice day for walking, for Miss Torkesly had seldom enjoyed a busier time than was her lot that afternoon. To whisper into the ears of all her friends and acquaintances that she had seen Mr. Enderby coming out of "The Spotted Dog" was Miss Torkesly's clear and bounden duty before she slept.

"So dreadful, my dear. Of course we all knew that the poor infatuated man gambled, but I'm afraid he drinks as well."

"It is terrible, but I believe they usually both go together. Fancy, to be seen coming out of 'The Spotted Dog' in broad daylight! I didn't know what to do, and I am afraid I bowed, my dear.

Just fancy ! bowing to a man who came out of 'The Spotted Dog.' I was too confused and horrified to see, but I daresay he was even walking unsteadily."

Yes, before twenty-four hours were over, the greater part of Tunntleton was aware of Maurice's delinquency. About how the unfortunate man left "The Spotted Dog" accounts varied according to the imagination of the narrator. He was variously described as being the worse for liquor, having reeled down the street, or carried home insensible to his wife. Such a schedule of wrongdoing as was now filed against Maurice Enderby was more than a man could hope utterly to refute.

It was not likely that Mr. Jarrow would be long left in ignorance of his curate's questionable proceedings. Mrs. Praun picked up the news in the course of her afternoon rambles. The general quite bubbled with excitement upon hearing of it. "Ah," he said, "we will see what Jarrow has to say to this. He took a precious high hand with me, and threatened me—me! General Praun, with an action for libel, told me that he had Mr. Enderby's own word for it that he never bet upon horses, and, when I pointed out his sudden plentiful supply of money, he informed me that he had nothing to do with that. Mr. Enderby had probably relations who assisted him from time to time. Ah!" continued the general, with a triumphant snort, "I suppose he was looking for one of those relatives at 'The Spotted Dog,' and we shall hear next that his duties necessitate his attendance at a public billiard-room; but I'll have it out with Jarrow to-morrow morning."

General Praun was as good as his word. Habitually an early man, he was at the rector's house almost as soon as he had finished his breakfast, and desired to see him. Shown into Mr. Jarrow's study, he plunged at once into his subject, and dilated upon it with such volubility that his astounded host was unable to get a word in.

"I told you so, Jarrow, I have told you all along, that this paragon of a curate of yours was a dissolute young man quite unfitted for his position. There is nothing remarkable in it; you are not the first rector by many who has been similarly deceived; but you are so obstinate; you shut your ears to what your parishioners tell you."

"Obstinate? me?" suddenly interposed the Rev. Jacob. "If there was ever a man open to conviction; if ever there was a man prepared to listen to facts or contravention of his own opinions, I flatter myself I am that man."

"Very good, then," said General Praun. "You have been told that Enderby gambles. You now hear upon unimpeachable testimony that he frequents what, though he may call it a second-class hotel, I should denominate a sporting public. If you think that befitting one of your cloth well and good, but you won't find Tunntleton agree with you."

"I need scarcely say," rejoined Mr. Jarrow, who had by this time somewhat recovered himself, "that I have heard nothing of this

before; that I should make inquiry into such a rumour is matter of course."

"It is no matter of rumour, I tell you," snapped Praun irritably.

"Then, sir," rejoined Mr. Jarrow in his pompous manner, "it will be so much the easier to investigate. Rumours are difficult to grapple with; facts demand explanation. I shall withhold my opinion till I have spoken to Mr. Enderby on the subject."

And the rather stately bow with which Mr. Jarrow intimated that their interview was at an end made the hot-tempered Praun's very pulses tingle.

"They take too much upon themselves, these parsons. By Jove! Jarrow dismissed me as I used to dismiss a subaltern in the old days. Bowed me out as if I had been a mere nobody instead of a general officer." And with these thoughts Praun fumed along on his way to study the daily papers at the Club.

CHAPTER XXX.

"BETTER I SHOULD RETIRE NOW."

MAURICE told his wife that evening what had happened; and Bessie at first by no means realized the consequence of his imprudence. She did not even know, as was very natural, the name of this second-class hostelry. She did not see that because upon one occasion her husband once entered a hotel it should be looked upon as any great crime on his part. A score of reasons might have taken him there—reasons which might be proclaimed from the house-tops. And it was not until Maurice explained to her that "The Spotted Dog" had the reputation of being a sporting-house, pointed out to her that Doncaster races were going on, and reminded her that he had been charged with betting on horse-racing, and that, though it was not true, his denial thereof had never been half believed in Tunnleton,—that she grasped what would probably be the outcome of this last imprudence.

"Ah, Maurice," she said, "Uncle John meant well, and from a money point of view his gift has proved princely, but I am afraid it will turn out a fatal wedding present in the end."

"You are always saying that," he rejoined testily; "but I think this last escapade is very likely to terminate my engagement at Tunnleton. Jarrow stood by me in the first instance like a thorough gentleman. He took my word that the charge was false, and refused to listen further to what my traducers said, but, looking back, I think that was due in part to the natural combativeness of his nature; moreover, he will very likely tire of perpetually fighting my battles. Do you know, Bessie, I am thinking seriously of giving up the Church."

Now, much as he had thought over this himself, Maurice had never said a word to his wife on the subject, and her first feeling was that of repugnance at the idea. "Oh, Maurice," she said, "you would surely never do that!"

"Why not?" he said; "it is surely better that I should retire now than become positively enrolled in a profession for which I feel I am unfitted. I shall never make a good clergyman, but I think I have stuff in me, and could do good work in some other calling."

Still, Bessie was not to be reconciled to the idea; she urged him to consider well what he was about, pointing out that, though he might have been imprudent, he had really done nothing wrong, and that there were other places besides Tunnleton in which he could obtain a curacy.

"Oh, it's a thing that there will be plenty of time to think about. Jarrow is not likely to wish me to leave until he has found some one to supply my place. However, we shall doubtless have some conversation on the subject to-morrow, as a conflagration in a high wind spreadeth not so quick as scandal in the mouth of the Torkeslys."

Maurice had not long to wait. General Praun had left the house not ten minutes when a servant was on his way to Mr. Enderby's with a note, intimating that the rector wanted to see him as soon as possible. Maurice was quite as anxious for the interview as Mr. Jarrow, and accordingly lost no time in making the best of his way to the rectory. He was admitted at once to the Reverend Jacob's sanctum, and there found that gentleman in a most unmistakable state of fume and fidget. It was matter of deep annoyance to Mr. Jarrow when any *protégé* of his—and he was much given to taking people up—was found wanting; he prided himself especially upon insight into character, and that his swans should occasionally turn out geese was always sore vexation to him. He snatched greedily at all petty pieces of patronage which fell at all within his reach; from the nomination of a pew-opener to recommending a man as a fit candidate for the town constabulary, Mr. Jarrow always endeavoured to have a finger in the pie; that any curate of his should be deemed unfit for his position was casting much discredit on his sagacity.

"Sit down, Mr. Enderby," he remarked, their first greetings over. "I have sent for you upon a very unpleasant business; but the fact has been pointedly brought to my notice, and it is incumbent upon me to ask you for an explanation."

"I will save you all further preamble, Mr. Jarrow," replied Maurice. "You have been told that I was seen coming out of 'The Spotted Dog' yesterday. Perfectly true, I was.—Why did I go in there? To learn the result of a race in which my wife's uncle, John Madingley, had got a horse running. Had I any bets on it? Most certainly not. I never have bet upon horse-racing, except in a very trifling way before I married, and most assuredly I have never wagered a sixpence since on that or anything else."

Mr. Jarrow paused for some minutes before he replied. He thoroughly believed Maurice, but then he felt at the same time that nineteen people out of twenty in Tunnleton would not.

"Mr. Enderby," he said at length, "although I am quite willing to accept your explanation, you must be aware that the public will not. As some eminent man, whose name just now I forget, has said, mistakes are worse than crimes. You must forgive my saying that since you have been among us your life seems to have been a succession of blunders. You have, by your own imprudence, put yourself so completely in the wrong light, that I am afraid it will be impossible to convince the public that you don't gamble, and, from what I heard this morning, they are likely to add drink to your transgressions. I have stood by you as long as I could, but you must excuse my saying," and few would have given the pompous rector credit for the kindness with which the words fell from his lips, "that, under the circumstances, you can exercise no influence for good in the parish."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Jarrow," replied Maurice quickly, "and, as you were doubtless about to say it is better under those circumstances we should part, we will look upon that as clearly understood between us, and I shall remain now only so long as suits your convenience."

"Well, Mr. Enderby, you have taken the words out of my mouth, but I do think that will be the best arrangement we can arrive at. Shall we say, sir, about two months from this date? That will give you time to look round as well as me."

"I have to thank you, Mr. Jarrow," said Maurice rising, "for much kindness since I have been here, and shall be very glad to time my departure with regard to your convenience. As for myself, let me tell you in strict confidence that I have quite made up my mind to resign the profession. And now, for the present, I will say good-morning."

Mr. Jarrow remained for some time after Maurice's departure in a brown study. He shook his head two or three times, like a man who has come across a phenomenon beyond his comprehension. He had had curates resign before now, but this was his first experience of a young man resigning the profession as well as the curacy.

It soon became evident to Maurice that Tunnleton society was unfeignedly shocked at the last scandal in connection with his name. That he should dabble in horse-racing had been deplorable, shocking in the eyes of most people, but a clergyman who "frequented public houses" (that he had only been seen entering one once was a fact quite lost sight of) had put himself quite without the pale. When Tunnleton heard that he was going away, it shook its head, and opined that Mr. Jarrow could do no less. It was a sad pity that a young man should be so depraved, but of course he was useless in his present position and Tunnleton feared would do no good anywhere. And now curiously enough a reaction set in in favour of Mrs. Enderby. How it began one hardly knew, but Bessie had made some few friends in the place and it probably owed its origin to them. It suddenly became the

fashion to express great commiseration for "poor Mrs. Enderby," and society delighted to paint imaginary pictures of Bessie vainly attempting to keep her husband in the straight path. It was difficult to say which suffered most from the new order of things—Maurice or his wife. He on his part was subject to the most freezing return to his salutations, but I doubt if that was so hard to bear as the ostentatious pity to which his wife was subjected. Nothing was ever said to her, but the ladies of Tunnleton had determined that she was to be pitied and condoled with, and their faces could not have expressed more mournful sympathy had she been lamenting the actual loss of her husband. They both agreed that Tunnleton was unendurable, and Maurice speedily asked Mr Jarrow to release him as soon as possible.

Two people there were whom Maurice determined to take into his confidence. One of these was Frank Chylton, to whom he had already told his story of his singular wedding gift. He now thought it only right to explain to him the itching curiosity that had led him to commit the imprudence of entering "The Spotted Dog." The other was General Shrewster. The latter had heard the whole story of the wedding present from John Madingley, and the comic side of the business had tickled him immensely.

"I can understand his reticence," he said, "but I am afraid it is destined to do him a good deal of harm here. You see this is an eminently respectable place, extremely orthodox and all that sort of thing, and when people are that, they are always not willing but greedy to believe the very worst of their neighbours."

But when Maurice told him of this second imprudence the general simply roared with laughter.

"My dear Enderby," he said, "how could you do it? You know you were, so to speak, under the ban of Tunnleton, now you'll be positively outlawed; what are you going to do? You will never make head against it."

"I am not going to try," replied Maurice quietly; "I have resigned my curacy and am only waiting now as a convenience to Mr. Jarrow. Further, general, I consider myself unsuited to the profession, and am going to adopt some other calling."

"There I think you are right; it's a pity that you've thrown away a whole year, but anything is better than a life-long mistake. I can only say I shall be very glad to help you should it at all lie in my power. As far as ways and means go, your uncle promised to assist you to a start; still, I should be afraid his interest would lie chiefly in the profession you are about to abandon. For myself, I have none except in my old trade."

"Thank you very much, general," replied Maurice; "I will ask for your good word without fail should I want it, but at present I have not made up my mind as to what I shall do."

"Will you let me give you one piece of advice, the warning of a man who has been through the furnace: keep clear of the race-

course whatever you do. I was a rich man once, and should be so now had I not been bitten by the turf tarantula. I took the fever very badly, and, unless I very much mistake, you are a man likely to contract it in its most virulent form. It makes your pulses tingle even now, and you will probably be quite carried away if you find yourself in the thick of the fray. There, I am going to say no more," said the general laughing; "a word is more likely to be remembered than a sermon in these cases. Of course my mouth is closed about what you have told me, but I think the sooner you allow Chylton and myself to make the whole story public the better."

"I don't want it published until I am gone," replied Maurice; "I am too angry to care to right myself in the eyes of the people here; and now I will say good-bye for the present."

CHAPTER XXXI.

A LITTLE DINNER.

NEXT week brought two things to Maurice Enderby: first, a jubilant letter from old John Madingley, inclosing a very handsome cheque on account of the "Champagnes," "and though," he added, "I was not there to see, and indeed never have seen the 'Wandering Nun' run except that time at Goodwood, yet I am convinced she is the best I ever owned; let her only keep well and the Oaks is a moral certainty for her next spring." The other letter was from Bob Grafton, and ran as follows:

"DEAR MAURICE,

"I am afraid you are about the most hopelessly ruined man of my acquaintance. A man who has only to sit still and see hundred-pound notes dropping into his lap is certain to deteriorate; he is bound to get out of the idea of ever earning his living in future. The filly is a clipper, and made a perfect show of her field on Tuesday. By the way, I met young Balders at Doncaster and he tells me that you are about to leave Tunnleton. What does that mean? Are you tired of it or has the petulant little place tired of you? When we cast out from its bosom your most virulent foe—Richard Madingley—if that really is his name—I thought that Tunnleton would be bound to acknowledge its obligation to you. Do you know I saw that precious young scoundrel in the outer ring on the Leger day; he was in close conference with Pick and one or two more of the same kidney; you may depend upon it he is a regular hanger-on of the turf: I don't mean of the jackal species, but he has no more right to the social status he assumed in Tunnleton than he probably has to the name of Richard Madingley. I shall be glad to hear about why you are leaving Tunnleton, also what are your intended movements. I presume you are in search of a fresh curacy, or can it be possible that you have made up your mind to resign the profession? Kindest regards to Mrs. Enderby, and tell her her pretty turn-out requires no outriders,

though I admit the 'Wandering Nun' is enough to tempt her fortunate owners into the most profuse expenditure.

"Ever yours,

"ROBERT GRAFTON."

As he finished the letter Maurice could not help thinking that perhaps the one good thing he had done at Tunnleton was compelling Richard Madingley to leave the place, and so saving Edith Molecombe from rushing on her fate. He little dreamt of how, if chance had not intervened, his efforts would have been unavailing, and that, but for a valued client of her father's having proved rather long-winded, Edith would have been the partner of Dick Madingley's compulsory retreat. The person who not a little astonished Maurice at this juncture was Mr. Molecombe; the banker had called upon the Enderbys at the instigation of his partner, Frank Chylton, when they first made their appearance in Tunnleton, and when the rumours to Maurice's discredit arose there could be no doubt that he rather dropped them. He did not take a rabid view of Maurice's conduct like General Praun, and thought, probably, that report considerably exaggerated his misdoings, but he did think that Mr. Enderby was not exactly an acquaintance to cultivate. He was cautious and civil enough when they met, but he no longer asked the Enderbys to his house. Now a reaction had arisen in his mind; he knew that Maurice was *bonâ fide* John Madingley's nephew by marriage, just as he knew that Dick was an impostor. Very sore about the somewhat ridiculous position he had been placed in, he had a sort of hazy idea that he owed reparation to the right man; he felt that he had been swayed very much in his judgment by Richard Madingley, and, being a tolerably clear-sighted man, thought that Maurice had perhaps had hard justice dealt out to him. Mr. Jarrow, for instance, would hardly have taken his curate's part without being satisfied that the allegations against him were untrue; as for this last scandal, he had taken the trouble to make a few inquiries concerning it, and easily ascertained that "frequenting" meant that he had been once seen coming out of "The Spotted Dog." As Mr. Molecombe remarked to himself, "A gentleman don't live close upon a twelve-month in a place like Tunnleton without the fact of his frequenting public-houses being known."

Maurice, unable to think of any other reason for the banker's increased cordiality, at last attributed it to the satisfactory balance standing to his account, still, he was rather taken aback at Bessie's getting a note from Mrs. Molecombe asking them to waive ceremony and come and dine in a friendly way.

There are wheels within wheels even in an invitation to dinner; and the conceit would be taken out of a good many of us could we know the real reason why we are bidden to the feast. We should be astonished to find how rarely it is for our own sakes. It was quite true that Mr. Molecombe was disposed to be much more

cordial to the Enderbys than he had been, but for this invitation they were indebted in a great measure to his daughter. Edith Molecombe was much depressed about the tangle of her love-affair. That she was very earnest in her love for Dick Madingley was evinced by her consenting to elope with him. She had heard nothing of him since that brief peremptory whisper in Tunnleton Station when he had slipped her ticket into her hand. She had heard—it is difficult to say quite how, but young ladies in Edith's situation do contrive to get news of their truant lovers in marvellous fashion—that Mr. Enderby and a strange gentleman had called upon Richard Madingley only a day or two before his departure. Now Edith Molecombe knew very well that Maurice was no friend of Dick Madingley; she knew, on the contrary, that the Enderbys had been rather pointedly excluded from the two or three garden-parties Dick had given. It was therefore, decidedly, not as a friend that Maurice would call there. She fretted dreadfully over this mysterious silence on the part of her lover; he must have seen her father at the station, and have understood why she had to abandon their scheme. She was unable to write to him, as she did not know his address; but he, if he chose, could have no difficulty in letting her hear from him. Whatever Mr. Enderby's business might have been, it was possible that it might throw some light upon her lover's silence. In the course of the evening, she thought, she should have no difficulty in questioning Maurice on this point.

The Enderbys, at Maurice's instigation, accepted the invitation. He was quite as curious to have some conversation with Edith Molecombe as she was with him. He knew her but slightly, and had taken no particular interest in her till the events of the last few days had brought her so prominently to his notice.

The only people asked to meet them were the Chyltons. These acted as a sort of connecting link between the Enderbys and their host, and, as the banker kept an undeniable cook, the little dinner passed off gaily. A regret was expressed at the coming departure of Maurice and his wife, but the subject was not unduly dwelt upon. Richard Madingley and his misdemeanours were naturally not alluded to; and, in short, when the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room, everything had gone off most sociably and pleasantly. Mr. Molecombe was no niggard, he thoroughly enjoyed entertaining, and, though he would have been puzzled to explain what had induced him to give this little banquet, yet he had got on very well with Maurice, and had come to the conclusion that gentleman was a very good fellow. Taking up his favourite position on the hearthrug, Mr. Molecombe rather confused Mrs. Chylton and Mrs. Enderby by favouring them with his views on the political state of the country, while Edith carried Maurice off to a distant table to look over photographs. She was a young lady of considerable determination, and lost no time in broaching the subject that was nearest her heart.

"Mr. Enderby," she said in a low voice, "I have one question to ask you. Will you answer it?"

"If it really is only one question," rejoined Maurice, smiling, "I think I might say yes; but one question is very apt to lead to a string."

"Why did you call upon Mr. Madingley last week? He was no friend of yours, surely?"

"Certainly not," said Maurice, "I called to see him on business."

"That is no answer," replied the girl quickly, "what business?"

"That is another question, and I must think a moment before I answer it."

There was a pause of several seconds, and then Maurice continued:

"I am not sure that it would be fair to tell you that. Like everybody else in Tunnleton, I am of course aware of the relation in which you lately stood to him. I should be exceedingly sorry to say anything that might hurt your feelings, and therefore, if you please, we will leave the subject where it is."

"No, no," she said quickly, "tell me all; whether for good or evil I have a right to know what men say concerning him."

Again Maurice hesitated for some little time. At last he answered slowly, "Perhaps you are right, you ought to know. If I give you pain, forgive me. At any rate I will be brief. I saw Richard Madingley, in company with a friend of mine, to inform him that he was down here under false colours, and that it was my duty to unmask him before all Tunnleton, unless he thought proper to avoid such scandal by leaving the place in forty-eight hours."

"And what induced you to tell such a lie as that?" said Edith, with quivering lips.

"I had tolerable proof of what I asserted, and that Mr. Madingley thought there was some truth in it was proved by his accepting my terms and leaving Tunnleton within the time specified. We will drop the subject now, if you please, Miss Molecombe, but you may rest assured of one thing, that Mr. Richard Madingley is not at all what he passed for in Tunnleton, and that it is extremely doubtful whether that is even his name." And with that Maurice rose from his chair with a hint that perhaps they had better join the circle.

"You don't quite like the idea, Bessie, of my giving up the Church," said Maurice as he drove his wife home; "but do you know the three friends I have mentioned it to have not uttered a syllable of remonstrance. General Shrewster and Grafton, on the contrary, clearly think I am right in doing so; while as for dear old Frank Chylton, he has clearly regarded me as a square peg in a round hole ever since I have been here."

"You know best, Maurice, still I confess to a feeling that it is too late for you to turn back now."

"You forget that I am only in the novitiate, and not as yet actually elected to the ministry."

Bessie said no more, but she still had her doubts as to whether her husband would be right in doing this thing.

Edith Molecombe retired to her own room as soon as the visitors had left; but it was very late that night before she sought her pillow. She had had her interview with Maurice Enderby, and for the first time unbelief in her lover sprang up in her mind. She had been very much impressed by Maurice's manner; unlike her father he had hesitated at speaking at all about Richard Madingley; when he did speak it was in the quiet, resolute tones of a man confident of his assertions and of his power to prove them. He had passed over her insult, and Edith's face blushed even now as she thought how very rude she had been to him in her own home. Careless of that, he had been only anxious to warn her that her lover was not what he represented himself to be, and to caution her against trusting in his words. That said, he had evidently no wish to touch further on the subject. Could it be so? Was it the old story? Had she also set up for herself a false idol and fallen down and worshipped? She had refused to believe her father, she had refused to believe all stories to Dick Madingley's detriment that reached her ears; but Maurice Enderby had cast doubts into her mind, and for the first time she felt that it was well her future was yet in her own hands.

Generals Maddox and Praun were much exercised in their minds when they met upon the Promenade the morning after the banker's little dinner. To have given a stranger a mutton-chop in Tunnleton unknown to the community would have been difficult. Mr. Molecombe's entertainment, it need scarcely be said, was already talked about.

"I really am surprised at Molecombe," said General Maddox. "Think of a respectable man like him entertaining a dissolute young man like Enderby, a perfect scandal to his cloth. Upon my honour, I don't know what society is coming to."

"Shameful! disgraceful! I call it," replied General Praun, angrily. "That is where it is, sir; the plutocracy is playing the very devil with the country. Molecombe is a man of business; Molecombe is a mammon worshipper. What does Molecombe care about a man's private character as long as he keeps a good swinging balance at his bank? What does he care, sir? answer me that;" and General Praun inflicted sundry severe punches on the flags at his feet, as if exhorting the very stones to rise and bear testimony on his behalf. "I tell you what, Maddox," he continued, lowering his tone, "if Beelzebub's account stood at over four figures, it's my impression Molecombe would ask him to dinner!"

General Maddox shook his head solemnly, and said gently, "Too true, I am afraid; but Molecombe will live to discover that a gambler's account is liable to considerable fluctuations;" and with this exchange of amiable sentiments the two veterans separated.

(To be continued.)

“ THAT HEART OF THINE.”

OH ! love, ere we part, let me speak once—
Just once to that heart of thine,
Whose pulses no passion can quicken,
Who dreams not that love is divine.
If I plead with you—say—will you listen ?
Will my words make you tremble and start ?
Will those cold eyes not soften and glisten
With love's tender smart ?

Oh ! love, are the days all forgotten,
The days that I thought were for aye
Which sorrow from memories begotten
Is clouding my spirit to-day ?
Oh ! love, did you only but love me,
What rapture and joy would be thine !
The sunshine of life would surround thee,
The sadness be mine.

In the days that are coming, my loved one,
The days full of shadows and pain,
Will the love of my heart then awaken
An echo in thy heart again ?
Though cruel and cold, I adore thee,
With love at its highest and best ;
Ah ! never it waneth, believe me,
Till Death giveth rest.

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

THE present season, now drawing to a speedy close, will long be remembered as an extremely brilliant one. The Jubilee year of our good queen's reign became, in a manner, concentrated into the later days of June and the earlier ones of July. These saw London full of notabilities, kings, princes, princesses, grand dukes and their duchesses, Eastern potentates, whose raiment was so dazzling to our unaccustomed eyes that few of us could take real note of the wearers. Perhaps the Corporation Ball at the Guildhall afforded the curious the best opportunity of seeing these distinguished persons. The penalty of standing for three hours was rewarded by an excellent view of the royal guests, among whom the Crown Princess of Germany appeared to excite the greatest interest. The eldest child of Queen Victoria, whose sex proved so disappointing just at first, is not often seen in this country. Of late years, when she has come here, it has been only to hide herself in the obscurity of some rural retreat; and, even on this occasion, she preferred the suburban freshness of Upper Norwood to the formalities of Buckingham Palace during the first weeks of her stay. Consequently, her face and figure are almost unknown to the British people. As she passed up the corridors to the reception dais on the night of the ball, we saw a lady with dark brown hair, smoothly banded away from her face. Her smiling eyes appeared to be greyish blue, and a certain stately carriage of the head accentuated her remarkable likeness to her mother, as she was some twenty years ago, and gave an effect of height to her figure. She is by no means tall, and yet no one would call her short, so well-proportioned is her figure, and so well does she walk. Nor would any one be inclined to associate the idea of a grandmother with this pleasant-faced and bright-eyed royal lady. She looks about thirty-five, and has a much younger air than Princess Christian. Yet she has been a grandmother three or four years. One could, however, quite realize that our Princess Royal is an influence in Europe. There is much decision in her face. Firmness is to be traced in the lines of the chin, yet does not contradict the kindly mouth. A look of power in the eyes matches the regal pose of the head, and all the while, the whole expression is one that would induce a troubled child to appeal with confidence

to the owner for help and consolation. Stately Prince Fritz has a noble partner.

Another personage who was regarded with much curiosity was the King of Denmark, on whose arm leaned the Princess of Wales. He is tall and must have been handsome not very long ago. He retains in some sort the boyish look of lightheartedness which is always fascinating in middle age. Fun seemed to lurk in the corners of his eyes and mouth, as he glanced hither and thither among the crowd. His daughter seems to adore him, and the humorous expression of his eyes was reflected in hers as she made some low comment which was responded to with a broad smile. The princess herself looked exquisite, her lovely colouring showing to advantage in the soft radiance of the electric light. Her coronet of diamonds was even more becoming to her than was the marvellous and matchless tiara of diamonds and emeralds to the Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia. Hers is a face rather difficult to fit with an epithet. She is not precisely beautiful. To call her handsome would be to invite contradiction, and to say that she is pretty would be an injustice, for she is far more. Her fascinating face would need hours, if not weeks, to read. It is a charming volume, not a page, or a single line, as most faces are. To my mind she is a perfect embodiment of Catherine, in Emily Brontë's wonderful story, "Wuthering Heights." There is the same inexpressible charm, the same pride, the same sweetness, the same scorn, the same cleverness, the same ineffable sadness and the same mirth. She looks as though her life would one day afford matter for a dozen romances. But like Catherine, she rather gives one the idea expressed by Mrs. Carlyle of being "gey ill to live with." There is no placidity, no repose, no comfortable levels anywhere. Such natures are as difficult to "companion" comfortably as it would be to sit at rest on a gymnastic swing. One has always to be setting one's moral and spiritual clock to their varying time, fast one moment, slow the next.

An amusing circumstance about the Indian princes was the calm serenity with which they turned to stare at any one who inspired them with interest. A pretty girl in the front row of gazers suffered a short agony of embarrassment from the long intentness with which one of these magnificent personages regarded her, looking back over his shoulder as he walked, and showing not the smallest concern for her visible distress and her glowing blushes.

The kings of Saxony and of the Belgians are contrasts in every way. The former is the more regal of the two, though shorter by several inches. His face has much dignity of expression, besides a look of shrewdness and common sense, which is by no means a usual characteristic of either imperial or regal persons. The King of the Belgians is very tall, but does not impress one with any idea of kingliness; his gait is almost slouching, and his eyes

have a shifty look. His queen, on the contrary, has a charming face. Her eyes look straight at the person she is talking to, with a sort of laugh in them; her beauty is as unmistakable now as when, some years ago, she was one of the brightest stars in the firmament of the Austrian court.

Queen Kapiolani's dignity is of a kind that makes the beholder smile—not because the lady's skin is dark and her eyes rather closely set together, but because the stately air is so evidently not that of daily life; it is a sort of strut, a cross between the prima donna's long and jerky step and the flat-footed walk of the peacock when his tail is vaingloriously erect. Her dusky majesty has a pleasant look withal, though I should be sorry to rouse the ire that lies not quite *perdu* in the depths of her glowing eyes. She is too self-assertive in manner to be compatible with true dignity, which is always sufficiently sure of itself to dispense with forms and ceremonies.

We thought that the papal representative, Monsignor Ruffo Scilla, was treated with scant courtesy by his civic hosts. This gentleman belongs to a princely house, and has all the air of doing so. The disinclination of the aldermen to approach him may possibly have proceeded from their consciousness that Italian had not been included in their early or later education. The Stock Exchange and the City Mart are not precisely the places where one is likely to pick up courtly phrases of the exquisite *lingua Romana*, which sounds so mellifuously soft in *bocca Toscana*.

London was a veritable burning fiery furnace during the most brilliant weeks of the season, and the flight towards rural scenes began earlier than usual this year. Henley Regatta was welcomed as an airy outing by thousands, who turned a mile or so of the Thames into an urban crowd. Lovely indeed looked Beauty on a house-boat or under an umbrella tent in the golden weather that prevailed. This has been a season of garden-parties. Every one who has even the semblance of a garden has recognized the opportunity of really delighting London friends with the joys of fresh air, a seat under the green trees, and a cup of tea in Nature's drawing-room. Most welcome have been these rural interludes to town life, and the gratification of seeing one's friends *en masse* has been almost equalled by the delight of inhaling air that may with some appearance of truth be called fresh, and of seeing those "boundless tracts of sky" that, to the vision limited by miles of brick and mortar, seem almost to bring an added sense: a feeling of space enlarged and capacity of sensation extended.

LONDON SOCIETY.

SEPTEMBER, 1887.

5. A LIFE INTEREST.

By MRS. ALEXANDER,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOING O'T," "AT BAY," "BY WOMAN'S WIT," ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.

A GREAT SURPRISE.

ELLIS prolonged his visit to town for a week after George's departure, and Marjory found that time hung very heavily on her hands.

Although she had never quite overcome her feeling of uneasiness when in his presence, the kind of distrust to which his cold insolence had originally given rise—he had amused and interested her—she was conscious that an under-current of mutual understanding had established itself between them, indeed, she was at times almost startled by the intuition he displayed as regarded her own unspoken wishes and the small difficulties into which her impetuosity sometimes led her. When she thought of it, she was half angry at the influence he was gaining over her. She did not like him, not really; yet when he came suddenly behind her as she sat reading or working and she felt his breath upon her cheek, when he spoke softly, she could not prevent herself from flushing, or her heart from beating with a curious emotion that was half dread.

During his absence, she forgot all this in a great measure; besides, her imagination was much occupied by Dick, his plans and hopes. She had quite made up her mind that he was going to be a great architect, a second Wren. How she wished she were a boy! boys had so many more chances than girls, as she was; though she felt she was not ignorant, she dared not hope for anything save the humblest kind of employment, as nursery governess, perhaps, which after all is only a bigger name for children's maid.

In this dull interim, however, Uncle Carteret did not let her

idle. He hurried her to finish the catalogue, and besides gave her letters in his own crabbed writing to his solicitor to copy, letters from which, without giving them much attention, Marjory gathered that the old gentleman was taking advice as to the sale of his property and the settlement of a sum of money on his heir-presumptive. A good deal was mentioned about breaking the entail, and, indeed, the correspondence bristled with law terms which were Greek to Uncle Carteret's young secretary.

The accomplished old critic was remarkably irritable and hard to please, and Marjory longed for Ellis, who always appeared to have a repressive effect on his fractious kinsman. Indeed, she laughed at her own conceit and folly when she found herself looking earnestly in the glass the evening Ellis was to return in time for dinner, arranging flowers in her dress and otherwise taking special care in making her toilet. "I am a goose! yet I don't choose to look quite a dowdy when the 'ambassador' returns from the grand people he has been with," she said to herself apologetically. "I should take just as much trouble for George and Dick, and they would admire my pretty dress immensely; I am sure they are worth dozens of Mr. Ellis; but what a clever masterful man he is with all his smoothness!"

Ellis did not return alone. There arrived with him a friend of Mrs. Carteret—a much travelled unmarried lady of a certain age of good family and indifferent means. She had known Mr. and Mrs. Carteret for some years, and had written to offer them a visit on her way from the Isle of Wight to the north. Mrs. Carteret was charmed to receive her, for she was a complete encyclopedia of information respecting the inner life of the "upper ten" at home and abroad.

It need scarcely be said that Ellis did not travel with her further than the short distance between the railway station and the Priory.

He only made his appearance as dinner was announced, and had no time for more than the briefest greeting to Marjory. He spoke to her occasionally across the table, and but for him she would have partaken of that meal in total silence; their eyes met more than once, when Marjory smiled frankly, and Ellis felt that he was welcome.

In the drawing-room after dinner, Mrs. Carteret and her friend soon fell into an eager whispered conversation, above the indistinctness of which, exclamations of, "Incomprehensible, my dear!" "Extraordinary conduct in a woman of her rank and breeding!" "A perfect brute, I really can use no other word!" occasionally rose clear and audible.

Mr. Carteret and Ellis did not join them till late, and the latter at once walked over to where Marjory was sitting in a corner engaged on an elaborate piece of stitchery which Mrs. Carteret had given her. "And tell me how things have gone all

these long days I have been away?" he asked, drawing a chair between her and the rest of the company. His deep-set eyes glowed as he spoke, and seemed to fasten upon hers as if he would dive into the recesses of her soul.

Marjory was most indignant with herself, for her heart throbbed uncomfortably, and she felt that her cheek flushed and grew pale, why, she could not tell.

"Things have been just as usual; Uncle Carteret has been rather cross, and I have been making some mistakes."

Ellis did not reply, his eyes wandered slowly from the fresh speaking face uplifted to answer him to the slight figure and busy little hands.

"One day we had a visit from Lord Beaulieu and his sister," Marjory went on, feeling his silence oppressive; "she is beautiful, but so sad. I was quite ashamed of myself; I could not help gazing at her. I should like to see her again."

"How is Dick?" asked Ellis abruptly.

"Quite well, and getting on so well. I had a nice walk with him on Sunday, and I shall meet him next Sunday if it is fine."

"And George?"

"I have only had one little letter since he left;" there was a pause.

"I want to hear all about everything, but I must not stay now; Mr. Carteret is bent on whist. That gushing young person, Miss Danvers, is a past mistress of whist—see how she is smoothing the crust of Carteret's queer temper till he smiles—to-morrow she will charm both host and hostess, so you will be able to escape for a ramble with *me* and tell me your news."

"Very well," said Marjory, not knowing what else to say.

"I have something to tell you," added Ellis as he rose and went over to Mr. Carteret, who had beckoned him.

Marjory whispered a request to her aunt that she might go to bed, which was graciously granted, and she escaped for a quiet hour's reading and thought in her own room.

* * * * *

When Mr. and Mrs. Carteret started with their guest to drive as far as Beaulieu and show her something of the neighbourhood, Ellis was nowhere to be seen. Marjory, however, was too much taken up with a couple of letters she had received that morning to feel in any way nettled by his apparent neglect; she was anxious to speak with him, however, as her heart was full and there was no one else to whom she could open it.

As soon as the carriage had driven away she took herself and her letters to her favourite seat among the scattered stones of the ruined priory, and read them carefully over again. While thus employed and as she half expected, Ellis joined her. She made room for him beside her and finished the perusal without speaking.

When she had folded up the letters and put them in their

envelopes, Ellis said, "I am going to take a great liberty ; I am going to scold you." Marjory looked at him with slight surprise. "You have been spoiling your eyes with tears ; your eyes are meant for better usage, they are intended for smiles."

"They would be worthless eyes indeed if they could not shed tears," she returned warmly ; "but I am not going to cry any more now, and I do not think it quite nice or kind of you to notice my eyes."

"Perhaps it was not," gravely. "Forgive me, and tell me what has troubled you."

"I think I must, I have no one else to tell, and I am rather unhappy."

"Thank you. I shall be most interested."

"I had a letter from George this morning. He is to sail in a new ship of Rennie and Duncan's, next Thursday. They are going to Madras. He seems quite pleased ; he says they are to have a son of one of the owners on board, who is to take the voyage for his health, so they will not stay away very long, and oh ! Mr. Ellis, he says he saw you in London, that you are a jolly good fellow and would tell me all about it."

"There is nothing in all this to call for tears ?"

"Perhaps not ; but it is a little hard to have had such a short time with him, and then not to see him again before he goes !"

"This is not all the trouble, is it ?"

"No ; I had a note from Dick, and he says he cannot meet me on Sunday next, because he is going somewhere ; and he fears he will be engaged on the Sunday after, too. This is very unkind of him ! No one knows what may happen in a fortnight. I may leave this, and never see him again ! He cannot care."

"Boys of his age are very thoughtless," said Ellis gently, watching her as he spoke.

"Boys !" repeated Marjory as if speaking to herself. "He never was a boy, and he never was thoughtless."

"Then he prefers not to come ; possibly he may have found some young lady who is not a sister to take his Sunday walks with."

Marjory started, and then laughed softly. "Of course it is possible, but somehow I never thought of Dick or George having a sweetheart."

"That does not detract from the possibility."

"Still he might care a little for *me*, when I am so fond of him ! Of course I am fond of both my brothers—I have no one else to love."

"You consider it absolutely necessary to love some one ?"

"Yes, of course. It would be too dreadful not to love *some* one ! Fancy having no one to think of, no one to look forward to meeting, no one to trouble about, to have only oneself ! Why, it would be too desolate ! Even *you* must have some one."

"Even you," repeated Ellis with a slow smile. "Am I the most heartless person of your acquaintance?"

"I did not mean that," said Marjory gravely. "I do not know you well enough to judge, but you seem to me able to stand alone."

"Perhaps I am! Perhaps I am selfish, yet for all you know I may be capable of a vast amount of love; I sometimes suspect I am."

"I hope so, for your own sake," murmured Marjory, putting her letters back in her pocket. "Tell me, how did you happen to see George?"

"I asked him to dine with me, and to see 'Patience' afterwards."

"That was very kind of you," cried Marjory, turning her eyes full of tender gratitude to his; "he has so little pleasure, poor boy! I wish I had been with you."

"So do I," earnestly. "Well, I think George enjoyed himself, and he made himself very agreeable. Do you know, I was half inclined to call on Mrs. Acland."

"I wish you had; I should like to know what you would think of her."

There was a pause; Marjory gazed upon the grass at her feet, and Ellis gazed very intently at Marjory. She had seldom looked more attractive; a quiet wistful expression stilled her face, her ripe red lips were slightly apart, her dark brown eyelashes swept her cheek, and her gloveless hands were clasped upon her knee. What admirable colouring, Ellis thought, as he scanned her hair, her softly rounded chin, the pretty oval of her delicate face.

"I had something to say to you," he half whispered at last. Marjory started, her thoughts were evidently far away.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Nothing you will like, I fear. Your uncle has made up his mind to sell Langford, and I have found a purchaser. They—Mr. and Mrs. Carteret—will probably leave the end of this month."

"Ah! and I must go home! I am very sorry." She stopped abruptly, her mouth quivered, but she had self-control enough to keep back her tears.

"I suppose you must."

"I shall feel it much worse than it used to be."

"I fear so," said Ellis sympathetically.

"But I shall not stay at home," exclaimed Marjory with sudden fire.

"Where can you go?" asked Ellis.

"Oh! I cannot tell; I might teach little children, or read and write for some old lady. You see I am but half educated, and——"

"You are well read and more than usually intelligent," interrupted Ellis with an air of conviction.

"Do you really think so?" asked Marjory doubtfully. "Even

so, talking about things and teaching them are very different." Ellis did not reply, and after a pause she resumed, "I wonder how I should set about finding an engagement?"

"Advertising is the usual mode of making one's wants known," said Ellis absently.

"I should really prefer being a lady's maid or a housemaid to remaining at home," murmured Marjory as though to herself.

Ellis suddenly threw away his cigarette, and drawing a little nearer to her kept his eyes on hers as he said very quietly, "Let me offer an alternative—suppose you marry me?"

"Marry you!" repeated Marjory, quite incredulous and unmoved. "I thought you were going to give me some serious advice, that you were rather sorry for me, and you are only laughing at my troubles!"

"Laughing!" echoed Ellis, "I never was more intensely in earnest in my life. Nor can I understand your blindness. You must—you ought to have seen that more than a month ago I gave up resisting my love for you, and determined to win happiness if I could, cost what it might!"

"But I cannot believe it," cried Marjory, too much astonished to be confused. "How did you ever come to think of marrying me?"

"Because—well, because I could not help it," returned Ellis, smiling and amused at the curious dialogue, though his heart beat fast and it tasked his habitual self-control severely to keep back the ardent words which sprang to his lips. But he was playing a deep game, and he resolved not to lose it from any heedless impetuosity.

"But you ought to marry some great lady. Aunt Carteret says you will be an ambassador one day, and I am not fit to be an ambassadress."

"I love you, Marjory!" said Ellis in a low voice. His tone struck to her heart. If he loved her, that explained everything.

"It is most extraordinary," murmured Marjory, her colour changing and an expression of tender solemnity stealing over her face as the fact that she was loved and sought in marriage penetrated her understanding.

"This humility is not usual in you!" said Ellis, who had expected a saucy refusal at first, but could not therefore afford to lose time.

"It is not humility; I know that I am not unworthy of being loved, but I do not want anybody greater than myself, and then Mr. Carteret would never forgive you! You know he wants you to marry Miss Waring."

"He also wishes me to marry Mrs. Maynard. Unfortunately I cannot oblige him."

"I have an idea that it would be bad for you to quarrel with Uncle Carteret."

"It would be rather ruinous for me just at present, even were he to know I asked you to marry me," said Ellis.

"Then do not think of me; besides, you see it would not be worth your while to vex him, for you know I do not—that is, I am not in love with *you*."

"I know it but too well, my sweet Marjory! That is the reason I dared to speak so abruptly—so prematurely. You never seemed to see—I never could make you understand that I was trying to win you. I had so few opportunities, and you distrusted me so strangely! Now, do hear me. I am most infernally hampered, but I want you to give me a chance—a chance of gaining your heart."

"I know it is unkind to say so, but I don't think I could ever love you, though you are very nice," said Marjory, hesitating, and dreadfully distressed at having to give pain.

Ellis smiled, while his dark eyes glowed. "You must and shall, Marjory! You have cast some spell upon me. If you love no one else, you *must* learn to love me."

"It would be wiser not to ask me to try! I do not want to love any one in *that* way."

"What! do you intend to reject everything but *brotherly* love?"

"Yes, I find trouble and pain enough in my love for George and Dick. Suppose I were to love *you*," turning to look at him, then, finding his eyes embarrassing, averting her own, "and not be able to see you or perhaps write to you, it would make me more unhappy."

"But if you consented to be my wife," exclaimed Ellis with more fire than he had hitherto shown, "do you think I could endure existence apart from you? No, I should want you beside me every hour—every instant of my life!"

These words and the tone in which they were spoken made a profound impression on Marjory. Had Ellis only shown the sort of light but flattering preference for her he had shown at Mrs. Waring's party, she might have returned it with some innocent girlish coquetry, but the offer of a man's heart and life was a terribly serious affair, and transformed her for the moment into a thoughtful considerate woman.

"But you said it would be ruin to you if Uncle Carteret even knew you had asked me to marry you, how then——"

"It would certainly be ruin," interrupted Ellis. "But I do not intend him to know anything about it for a year or two."

Marjory looked straight at him with a puzzled expression which changed to grave displeasure as her colour rose.

"You mean to marry secretly?" she asked.

"I do. You must hear me, Marjory," said Ellis, catching her hand, which he held firmly in both his own, "I want you to understand how I am situated and what I propose; I want to in-

form you fully. I am dependent on old Carteret, and just at present I have almost, not altogether, succeeded in a most difficult and delicate negotiation respecting the sale of this property, to which I am heir, and the settlement of the proceeds on myself. I am not penniless, but to push my fortunes I need a larger command of money than I have; a wealthy marriage would give me all I want, but I can only repeat, I love *you*; the idea of any other woman is intolerable to me" (if he added "at present," it was mentally). "I cannot let you drift away out of my reach, I cannot leave you to be tyrannized over by a cruel woman, your bright youth, the period of love and pleasure, crushed and blotted out with premature misery! With me you would be tranquil, beloved, and sure of sympathy. Can your imagination not present a picture of what life might be with a lover for your companion, even though we were obliged to live in obscurity for a year or two, until I had gained a position which would render me independent, and I could proudly proclaim our union to the world?"

Marjory shook her head and tried to draw away her hand. "Obscurity would matter very little, but hiding is always shameful," she said. "Even if I loved you, I could not think of such a marriage."

"If you loved me, Marjory, you would do that and more for the man you loved! You have enormous capacity for love, or I have lost my power of reading character."

"I am sure it is impossible to say what I am capable of. Pray let me go, Mr. Ellis. Now that you know I do not care for you enough to marry you, I am sure you will not wish it any longer, and in a little while you will be glad. You must forgive me if I have pained you; I never dreamt you cared for me—I am not at all the sort of girl you ought to marry."

"I am the best judge of that," slowly releasing her hand. "Do not imagine I accept this refusal; I felt sure you would reject me, but, Marjory, I can wait! I am no headstrong impressionable boy, who can be checked by a first denial; I am master of myself, and I am determined you shall be my wife! I am determined to rescue you from the barren existence, the poverty-stricken monotony to which you seem doomed, and show you what life and love are! There, you sweet little witch, I will not torment you more just now. You will think of me, I know, because your kind heart grieves for the pain you have given; let your thoughts picture the difference of a home with the man who loves you and a home under your stepmother's rule."

He caught her hand again and kissed it twice before she could break away and run to the house.

He looked after her swiftly retreating figure and very deliberately lit another cigarette. "Not so bad on the whole," he said to himself. "There is more depth in her than I thought, and even more charm. Now, her heart and imagination will be my allies.

Did I ever think I should risk so much for any woman? The affair bristles with difficulties, but if she yields, I can overcome them. The conviction that it would ruin me if Carteret knew of my avowal will keep her silent; I am safe so far, I think she is loyal and she half fears me."

Marjory, her heart beating fast, took refuge in the safe solitude of her own room. It was some minutes before she could marshal the confusion of her quick crowding thoughts into anything like order.

Profound astonishment and uneasy dread were her predominant feelings. The astonishment, however, was tinged with a faint pleasant sense of gratified vanity. How did it happen that he had come to love her when she was so indifferent to him? It was quite unnatural! Why, if everything was fair and smooth and Uncle Carteret himself ready to pronounce the nuptial benediction, she would not like to marry Mr. Ellis, she could never fancy feeling at home with or feeling quite sure he meant what he said. How awfully cross Uncle Carteret would be if he knew! She must be very careful to seem quiet and composed at dinner, lest he should suspect anything. "For Mr. Ellis' sake I must be very prudent. He deserves that at least from me," she murmured to herself; then, all alone as she was, she blushed at the idea of meeting Ellis face to face knowing that he loved her, and recalled not without a feeling of helplessness the absolute certainty of his tone when he spoke of his determination to marry her in spite of herself. Could he really be kind and good? His wish to marry her was certainly disinterested, and no doubt life with him would be easier and pleasanter than at home. Still something in her heart forbid the banns, apart from the idea of a secret marriage, which was utterly repulsive and indeed impossible. How could Mr. Ellis think of such a thing or suppose she would consent to a step so closely bordering on disgrace? Would any one else ever love her and ask her to be his wife? If some kind good man she could even like tolerably offered her a home, she would accept it, and do her very best to make him happy and comfortable. "Men like comfort so much. If Mrs. Acland made my father uncomfortable she would not have half so much power over him. Oh! if he only had not married again, I might be his housekeeper and do everything for him. I could love him well if he would let me! I will write to him now this moment; perhaps he will answer me this time."

When the letter was finished it was time to dress for dinner; then came the awful ordeal of going into the drawing-room and meeting her lover's eyes.

Ellis was extremely prudent however. He kept his eyes in order and spoke to her at dinner in the most friendly unembarrassed way imaginable. Afterwards he played whist with much amiability, but before separating for the night managed to whisper, "You will be glad to hear that I am going over to Beaulieu to-morrow to dine and sleep."

"Then pray look well at Mrs. Maynard, and see how beautiful and charming she is."

"I know her, and I am proof."

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. ACLAND'S VIEWS.

"MARJORY," said Mr. Carteret, "show me the catalogue; is it finished?"

"Not quite; I have only one slip to copy, a few Z's."

"What an extraordinary confused mode of expression! you mean, I suppose, you have only a few works to enter the names of which begin with Z?"

"Yes, uncle; I tried to say it shortly."

"Hum! Brevity is the soul of wit! But I do not think you have much wit, Marjory."

"Oh! I do not suppose I have; still, I hope you have not found me too stupid?" looking up with an appealing glance, for she felt depressed and helpless. She had not recovered the shock which Ellis had given her. His avowal had banished her original, perhaps somewhat childish self for ever, and startled her into sudden thoughtful tender womanhood, amazed and half frightened to find she was the object of so serious a passion.

"Well, you were rather trying at first, but I have succeeded in teaching you a little, and it will have been a useful experience for you working under my directions; indeed I felt it was right to give you a chance, and I hope you will be the better for it when you go home."

"When I go home, uncle?"

"Yes; I do not think I shall remain here beyond the end of the month; we must go to London to prepare for a long residence abroad, and then your occupation will be o'er, Marjory."

"I am sorry—oh, so very sorry! Could I be of no more use to you when you leave the Priory? Shall you not have letters to write and things to copy? and Aunt Carteret, who is so kind, she likes me to read to her."

"Ah well, you see, when I have settled on permanent winter quarters, I am about to undertake a work of some importance treating of the Renaissance period and the fundamental principles of classic art. To assist me in this, I need the services of a man and a scholar; I don't suppose that you think yourself equal to such an undertaking, in spite of your high estimate of yourself."

"Indeed I do not," cried Marjory, much wounded and deeply regretting that she had stooped to ask a favour. "I well know that I am quite unequal for such a task, and I shall never say another word about it."

"I am glad you are so sensible," returned Mr. Carteret drily. "Now give me the catalogue. I shall mark the volumes I wish to keep; when I have done so, you must make a list of them and they can be packed ready for removal. The rest, with the furniture and effects, are to be sold by auction in September or October."

"And all your curiosities, uncle?"

"Oh! ah, I think of presenting them to the museum at D—, the county town, you know, to be called the 'Carteret collection,' and so perpetuate my reputation for antiquarian acumen. Let me have that list also, Marjory; I have a great deal to do, and not much time to do it in. Have you heard from home lately?"

"Not very lately."

"I really must take this opportunity of expressing my serious disapprobation of your father's choice of a profession—no, not a profession, a calling for his only son, a gentleman, too, on one side of the house at least."

"On both sides," said Marjory gently but distinctly.

"Yes, yes, of course. I believe he is positively a common sailor!"

"He is what is called an apprentice."

"Just so! Now no gentleman is ever apprenticed to anything, and considering that your brother is entitled to his share of your mother's fortune, I insist that it is not correct either in conduct or principle to take advantage of his right to the life interest for the benefit of his second family. It is most reprehensible; while he is ready to palm his daughter off on any relative who will relieve him of her!"

"You do my father injustice," cried Marjory, flushing crimson, while her heart beat almost audibly. "He hesitated to let me come; it was Mrs. Acland who persuaded him, it was Mrs. Acland who wished to get rid of me!"

"Why does he yield to an underbred woman of that kind, when he had the advantage of having a well-born gentlewoman for his first wife? Of course, Marjory, you understand I am not finding fault with *you*. It is quite natural you should wish to come to us; I even credit you, whether justly or not, it is impossible to say, but I *do* credit you with some wish for self-improvement. Now, when you return home, Marjory, I think it is your duty to remonstrate with your father; you are indeed at liberty to tell him the substance of my remarks."

"It would be much more to the purpose if you told him yourself face to face," cried Marjory, boiling over. "How could any girl tell her father such things? He would be kind enough to us, and fond enough of us, if Mrs. Acland did not put him against us. It is her fault about George, and about me too! If I had not been miserable at home, do you think I should have 'palmed myself off' on you? for it was my own doing altogether. I did hope I could have been of use and that you might have liked me; as it

is, I *have* a home to go to, though it is not exactly paradise, so I can leave you to-morrow: I have money enough for my journey!"

"Why, Marjory, I am astonished at such a display of temper; I had no idea you were such a spit-fire! You need not be in such a hurry to run away, it would be extremely ungrateful to do so, after I have had the trouble of training you and you have become of *some* use. In short, I wish you to remain until we leave the Priory; and if you are offended at any expressions I may have used in my natural indignation at the way you are treated, I am sorry. As to speaking to your father, I always have made it a rule through life never to interfere with what does not concern myself especially, and an excellent rule I have found it."

"I daresay," murmured Marjory.

"Now, as you understand that I wish you to remain, I trust," loftily, "I shall hear no more nonsense about going away."

"Then please, Uncle Carteret, remember I stay because you ask me."

"Oh! of course, of course; I really can waste no more time on these puerilities. Give me the catalogue of my antiques; there are a few I cannot part with: I will just mark them off."

Marjory felt the better for this brush with her uncle, it gave her confidence in herself and made him a little more civil; for Mr. Carteret belonged to that not inconsiderable class whose maxim is, "Kick him, he's down," and who are themselves immensely improved by a thrashing.

It was a great relief to her that Ellis prolonged his visit to Beaulieu till the afternoon of the third day. It was a trial to her to meet his eyes, to have to speak to him after his amazing avowal. In his absence the reality of the whole thing faded; she began to think it was a sort of dream, a delusion on his part, that a few days spent among people of the world to which he was accustomed would dispel. Still she felt curious to see him again. She fancied she should be able to perceive from his first words, from the tone of his voice, whether he had come to his right mind or not. Sometimes she regretted that she could not like Ellis better. Suppose he were a man she could be happy and at home with, and suppose he were free to marry her openly, what a splendid means of escape from her trying position with her step-mother? "But no," was her usual conclusion to such trains of thought; "I know I am headstrong and prejudiced, I dare not marry a man I do not love! Now I am half afraid of Mr. Ellis, he always disturbs me, and that sort of thing would be uncomfortable *every* day."

The presence of Miss Danvers set Marjory free from the necessity of accompanying Mrs. Carteret in her daily drives, and left her a good deal to herself. The loneliness pressed somewhat heavily on her spirit; the outlook was not cheering, and the chance of being able to tell her troubles to Dick seemed very remote.

Next Sunday he was positively engaged, and the Sunday after he was not disposed to meet her, but he had some good reason; she could not doubt Dick.

Having the house to herself, she ventured to open an old piano, which had been tuned previous to Mrs. Carteret's single dinner-party, and to play the accompaniment to one or two of the songs she had learned during the previous winter. From this occupation she was startled by Ellis, who came behind her and said:

"This is a revelation. I had no idea you could sing."

Marjory started up in dire confusion. "How you frightened me!" she exclaimed, and stood facing him with alarmed eyes, her hand pressed to her heart.

"I see I have, and I beg your pardon. I kept quiet because I wanted to hear your voice. It is sweet and sympathetic. Pray sing another ballad—I should like to hear a little more."

"It would be quite impossible," said Marjory, shutting the piano. "With the best will in the world I could not."

A look of displeasure clouded his face for a second. "I am very unfortunate in exciting your distrust," he said. "I assure you, judicious training would do wonders with your voice. It is not strong, but it has some excellent qualities. I am a great lover of music."

"All the more reason why I should not try your patience."

"I did not ask you to sing supposing your singing would charm me, but because it would give me infinite pleasure to find in you possibilities of perfection in future. Your future, you see, occupies me a good deal."

"You are very good to me," said Marjory softly, with graceful hesitation, leaning against the piano, her fingers playing nervously on the dark wood; "better than I deserve."

"If you think so," returned Ellis, "why do you fear me?"

"I do not fear you," exclaimed Marjory, suddenly conquering her embarrassment. "I do not fear any one, at least I hope not; why should I?"

"That is a 'why' very difficult to answer. If reason always ruled, we should have fewer inexplicable sensations, rarer instinctive insight, profound calm and extreme dulness! You are too sensitive to be always reasonable. Come, Marjory, you have not welcomed me back! How have things gone on since I left?"

"Just as usual; Uncle Carteret has been rather disagreeable;" she gave him her hand as she spoke. He held it with a gentle and increasing pressure, looking gravely at her.

"May I tell you why you fear me?" he asked, and went on without waiting for a reply; "it is because you know I love you—you know it better than I could describe it, and as yet you do not love me—as yet, sweet Marjory! The love may come then——" he stopped abruptly and drew her to him. She tried to extricate her hand; Ellis immediately released her. "Forgive me," he went on

in an altered voice, "I did not intend to bore you; I am not always reasonable either, you see. I suppose we may have tea though the mistress of the house is absent. It is a dull grey afternoon and will rain presently." He went across to the bell and rang. "You will be so kind as to 'pour out,' and I will tell you all about my stay at Beaulieu. Tea in the library," this to the servant who answered the bell, "and light the fire, it is damp."

Marjory felt it would be folly, affectation, to make any difficulty, and both were soon seated at the tea-table snugly ensconced beside the fire. Here Ellis completely laid aside the lover's tone, and talked charmingly on many subjects till Marjory grew interested and at ease. First he scored most successfully, observing as he handed his companion some buttered toast, "I saw your brother Dick yesterday."

"Indeed!" she cried, roused at once to eager attention; "did you speak to him?"

"No; you must remember he does not know who I am, but I heard of him. That artist *protégé* of, Beaulieu, Brand, seems greatly interested in you—let us say brother, and thinks highly of his abilities. There is some talk of getting the architect, Jervis, a well-known man, to take him up."

"Indeed! I suppose that would be a great help to Dick?"

"Very great indeed. That Brand is a curious fellow. He has a history or I am much mistaken; at any rate he knows what he is about as regards matters of art; he will make the interior of Beaulieu a gem as to decoration."

"I suppose Dick will write to me about this chance?"

"Very probably. I am not sure he knows anything of Brand's move yet."

"Oh!" cried Marjory, clasping her hands, "how proud, how delighted I should be if Dick turned out a great architect; they all thought him so dull and unenterprising."

"Except *you*, I suppose?"

"Indeed," returned Marjory with remorse, "I was as bad as any one else; I disliked and despised him for a long time, till I came back from school and saw how badly his mother treated him."

"Ha! a very sound reason for changing your estimate of his intellectual faculties," said Ellis.

Marjory laughed frankly, "That sounds very silly, but, you see, when I began to like him, I began to think him clever."

Ellis looked at her with an expression of amusement. "I fancy the young man has ability in some directions. If he is wise, however, he ought to turn contractor. Architects may earn fame, contractors pile up fortunes;" then he turned the conversation to building in general, and described some of the various styles he had seen in his travels, passing from these to other topics, and drawing Marjory into discussions which made her

almost forget he was her lover, so successfully did he divert her thoughts, and time flew pleasantly.

Uncle and Aunt Carteret with their guest returned and were well pleased to find tea ready.

* * * *

This spell of undisputed sway, when Mrs. Acland was free from the presence of her step-children and her first-born, was a halcyon time. Every member of the little household felt the benign influence.

Never had Mr. Acland's little dinners been more perfect or the weekly bills more delightfully small. His accomplished wife, as she sat at needlework or walked with her children in the Park, a model of well-dressed, careful refined motherhood, often reflected with sincere self-admiration on her own excellence. Any other woman, she thought, having made so false a start, and having been deceived into so beggarly a first marriage, would have gone down and down to the streets and the gin palace, whereas her own resolution kept her true to herself, and she had managed to reach land at last. Was it *terra firma*? Well, yes, at present, and the longer she rode at anchor the more firm would grow her hold on the heart, the spirit, the whole being of her husband. He could not live without her, she must make herself more and more essential to him; she rather enjoyed doing so. After all, set her free from her own son, who was only a legacy of trouble from a man she despised, and her husband's children, who were useless burdens (indeed Marjory was worse, she was an ever-present enemy, who, in case of difficulties arising, might be dangerous)—set her free from these, and she would be a *bonâ fide* good woman, quite suited to associate with the salt of the earth, indeed, a good deal beyond them in intelligence, ready to fulfil her duties, to make the lives of those who depended on her smooth and well-ordered, provided they bent to her authority, and ready also to sacrifice her own ease in order to carry out the system she considered best for others—and for herself.

The stars in their courses certainly fought on her side, as heavenly bodies ought. It was an immense gain this visit of Marjory to her maternal great-uncle. Perhaps the old man might take a fancy to her and keep her altogether. This, however, was a possibility not unmixedly agreeable. Mrs. Acland's dislike of her stepdaughter could hardly be satisfied with mere removal under advantageous circumstances; she would be better pleased to see her incur her father's serious displeasure, to know she was placed in some trying and humiliating situation, from which she could not escape without her stepmother's aid. Young and inexperienced as she was, there was about Marjory an instinctive doubt, an unconscious distrust of Mrs. Acland's fair-seeming that roused that lady's deadly animosity.

Early in August Mr. Acland, according to the usual habits of

professional gentility, took his family to the sea-side, and having seen them installed, returned to bivouac in his own house, and dodge the perils of house-cleaning during his exits and entrances, refreshing himself with a weekly visit to his wife from Friday to Monday.

The presence of one or two neighbourly families of severe respectability and considerable social importance made this a pleasant and profitable holiday to Mrs. Acland, who was extremely anxious to form a "circle" of her own which would be a species of buttress and an advantage to her children.

Mr. Acland greatly enjoyed his visits to Eastbourne. It was pleasant to turn his back on business, on querulous clients and hot dusty courts, for two whole days and nights; pleasanter still to find his handsome, becomingly dressed wife, with their pretty well-cared-for children, awaiting him at the station. Then the walk to their lodging along the parade, with the fresh salt scent of the sea, the sense of being welcomed and made much of, the placid satisfaction of seeing his wife smilingly saluted by Mesdames Brown, Jones and Robinson, the better-halves of eminent legal or mercantile men, all assisted to soothe and gratify him.

Then came a neat and appetising dinner, a stroll on the beach with the children, their disappearance with nurse when bed-time approached, and finally a quiet confidential hour with his admired spouse.

"By the way," said Mr. Acland, breaking the silence which had succeeded an interchange of gossip touching what had happened since he had been last there, "I had a letter from Marjory—I brought it with me. She says," drawing out his note-book and turning over its contents,—“she says the Carterets are going to sell the Priory and are going abroad. She supposes therefore she must return to us.”

"Let me see it," asked Mrs. Acland, holding out her hand. "Ah! addressed to the office, I see. No doubt she counts on your keeping the contents to yourself."

"I do not think so, nor is there anything in it which needs concealment."

"Very likely; but you must know how systematically she distrusts and opposes *me*. I regret to say it, but I cannot help seeing how painfully jealous she is of your affection for me, how gladly she would sow dissension between us. I would not for worlds speak or act unjustly to *your* daughter, but the instinct of self-preservation forces me to warn you, do not let her come between us, my dear husband."

"There is small danger of that," returned Mr. Acland, smiling with a proud consciousness of power and superiority on his wife. "No one can interfere with you, my love, in my estimation; but I think you credit Marjory with more depth than she possesses. She is headstrong, troublesome, foolish, but I should say incapable of scheming."

"So I used to think," said Mrs. Acland slowly, and proceeded to read Marjory's letter.

"Very affectionate indeed," was her observation when she finished it—"the most affectionate letter you have ever had from her, I think. I am sure I am the last person to find fault with any amount of affection bestowed on you, my dear, but I cannot help feeling that it is strange, certainly inconsistent, that so warm a regard for you does not make her more amiable to your wife."

"Poor Marjory has rather an unfortunate temper, but I think at heart she is——"

"Not grateful! I fear she cannot be considered grateful; you see here she says, 'The country is very pretty,' *et cetera*, and goes on about it; then she writes, 'I should have enjoyed myself very much only Uncle Carteret is very cross and exacting, I never know whether I please him or not, still I should like well enough to go abroad with them, but I fear there is no chance of this. How happy I could be with you, dear father, if I thought you loved me and would let me do things for you. Believe me, I only wish to please you, and I hope when I come back, which will be, I fancy, soon, you will sometimes talk to me and let me walk with you.'"

"Now, dear," continued Mrs. Acland, folding up the letter, "do you not see the drift of all this?"

"Well, I—I suppose she sees she has been troublesome and wishes to make amends."

Mrs. Acland looked down and smiled. "It is a most painful and ungrateful task, my dear husband, to find fault with your daughter, to unmask the slight crookedness of her nature, which renders her so hard to manage, but I feel I should be false to you if I hid my real impressions, as I read this letter I see its bearing so plainly that I am amazed you do not perceive it too. First, ingratitude to Mr. Carteret, who has loaded her with benefits; then bitter disappointment because she has evidently been unable to control her rebellious unmanageable nature, and so failed to ingratiate herself with the old couple; and finally an effort to make all straight with you, as she is obliged to return to your house. Few girls of eighteen would show such a profound regard for self-interest as she does."

"Ha! you think so? You certainly are a close observer of human nature; still I do not suppose——"

"You are farseeing yourself," interrupted his wife, "and it is to me curious that you do not remark that, anxious as she evidently is to put herself right with you, she never mentions me, and she sends the letter to your office, hoping it might escape my eye."

"She might have known we were not at home."

"She knew no such thing. Can you wonder, Robert, that I dread her return? She will estrange you from me, I know she will;" and with a heavy sigh Mrs. Acland leant her fair head against

her husband's shoulder for a moment; the dusk of evening had gathered over them and there were no passers-by.

"Of that you need not have the slightest fear," cried Mr. Acland with unusual energy; "I will not suffer any child of mine to make your life uncomfortable. If Marjory cannot accommodate herself to the constitution of my household, why—why she had better leave it."

There was a pause. Mrs. Acland had found her opportunity for inserting the thin end of the wedge.

"It would pain me infinitely to see your daughter obliged to leave your house," she said slowly, "but I greatly fear she will never be happy herself nor allow us to be happy while she is in it. You must see that she is an irreconcilable. George was always friendly; indeed, I am almost ashamed to say I prefer him to my own unfortunate boy. Had Marjory been responsive, all would have been well, but she is my implacable enemy; I am sure she would be glad to leave our house."

Mr. Acland listened without committing himself to any opinion.

He was not sufficiently modern to have taken in the nineteenth-century notion of girls going forth alone to do battle in life's warfare. He heartily wished that his wife and his daughter would live peaceably together. If they would not, he knew well *which* must suffer defeat and exile; but for the present he would postpone the evil day of decision, and he closed the discussion by remarking that they must wait and see how Marjory went on. If indeed she expressed a wish to leave home, why, he would think about it. "Meantime, my dear, will you answer her letter for me?"

"No, no," returned Mrs. Acland, rising from the bench where they had been sitting; "Marjory would certainly imagine that I had prevented your replying. You must do so yourself to-morrow morning before we drive up to Beachy Head. You ought to write a letter which will show her that you are alive to her little peculiarities, and that if she expects a father's affection she must show a daughter's obedience. Come, dear, it is growing chilly."

The answer which Marjory received to the outpouring in which her perturbed spirit had found vent on the memorable day when Ellis had asked her to be his wife, may be imagined.

It had been chiefly dictated by Mrs. Acland, and each word was well calculated to sting and wound.

She was reminded of her many shortcomings, rebuked for not having secured the regard of her excellent relatives, who might have become valuable friends, affording some relief to a father already overburdened by the claims of a large family; reproached for her neglect of her admirable stepmother, whose unceasing efforts to befriend and conciliate her deserved a better return; also for the small trickery of addressing her letter to the office; and finally

assured that her best way to win the love her father was only waiting to bestow, was to conduct herself amiably and dutifully to the excellent woman who was the comfort of his life.

The passion of grief, anger and despair which this epistle roused in the fiery loving heart of the recipient may be imagined.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DICK MAKES A MORNING CALL.

MARJORY, however, was not without some compensation to balance the pain her father's letter occasioned her.

Next day brought a note from Dick, in which he begged her to meet him on the following Sunday. He had given up all idea of the engagement he mentioned, as he had news to tell her which she would like to hear, and also he expected to leave Langford.

Marjory lost no time in sending a hasty reply, promising to keep the tryst, and for the rest of the week was in a state of unrest, hoping that nothing would occur to prevent her meeting her friend and brother, and looking forward to the relief of reading her father's letter to him and of opening her heart on this and other topics.

It had been hard for her to keep silence even with Mrs. Carteret, who was by no means inclined to receive confidences of a disturbing nature; and Ellis would certainly have heard all about it, had not his declaration sealed her lips. To complain of home troubles would only be to furnish him with arguments for her taking refuge from them with him, and she was vaguely conscious that his eyes, his touch, the sound of his voice soft and low at her ear when he came suddenly behind her to whisper some remark, produced a strange and almost unpleasant effect, her heart beat fast, and a curious fascination seemed to paralyze her will, she could hardly help staying to listen while he chose to speak.

On his part, Ellis carefully abstained from overt love-making; any third person might have listened to his conversation and believed he was only a grave, kind friend. But for all that, Marjory felt that he watched her, and constantly cared for her, staving off little unpleasantnesses and smoothing her way with amazing thoughtfulness and ingenuity.

Marjory grew more at ease; she would like him so much if he always kept up this tone; perhaps he might change his mind about wanting to marry her. It was such an extraordinary fancy for a man like him—a man so much older than herself too.

There was, however, no reason why she should not speak of Dick to him, and so she ventured to broach the subject as they sat virtually *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room after dinner, while Mr. and Mrs. Carteret, the rector and Miss Danvers were enjoying a

quiet rubber. Marjory had been thinking deeply over her needlework, picturing all that Dick might possibly have to tell her; Ellis was reading 'The Fortnightly,' and looking up suddenly caught her eyes. "Well?" he said, drawing his chair a little nearer.

"Yes," she said smiling, "I wanted to speak to you, I must speak; I have had a note from Dick; he wants to see me on Sunday, and he is going away; I suppose with the architect you told me about. Oh! I do hope nothing will happen to prevent me."

"No, we must manage too well for that," returned Ellis, laying down his magazine.

"Miss Danvers is going on Saturday," said Marjory dolefully.

"No matter; if there is any difficulty you had better tell Mrs. Carteret of your appointment."

"So I intend. I have no idea of making a secret about meeting dear old Dick; only he does not care to come here. Suppose the weather is bad?"

"Then he must write."

"Then he is going away soon and I may not see him for years. Of course brothers must go away, one does not expect to see much of them after they grow up, but I should like to bid him good-bye."

"Certainly; we must hope the best, and if the weather changes, why, I will see what is to be done." There was a pause, then Ellis resumed, "I found the first volume of Buckle's 'History of Civilization' on the library table just before dinner; who was reading it—Mr. Carteret?"

"No, I was; and when I heard the bell I jumped up in a hurry and quite forgot to put it in its place; I had better go and do so at once. If Uncle Carteret finds it, he will be vexed."

"No, do not trouble yourself; I put it in its place, and I put a mark where the book was open. Tell me, does it interest you?"

"Yes, greatly. Why? do you think I cannot understand it?"

"No! If you care to read it, you understand it, I presume; but it is rather a tough book for so young a reader."

"I like tough books sometimes," said Marjory, looking down; "they seem to brace one up like walking across a breezy common, and they comfort me in an odd sort of way more than novels, much, much more than religious books, which, indeed, I never could read."

"Ah!" said Ellis, a long-drawn reflective "ah." "And do politics come within the range of your sympathies?"

"I suppose you are amused at the idea of my wading out of my depth," said Marjory good-humouredly. She had never answered Ellis sharply since she knew he loved her or fancied he loved her. "I do not know about politics, I do not understand them in the least; they are always going on, you see. When politics have grown cold and turned to history, people can write about them and explain them, but while they are boiling and

bubbling, it must take a strong intellect to comprehend the mixture. To men who can see through the puzzle, politics must be intensely interesting!"

"You are a shrewd philosopher for eighteen, Marjory. You allow me to call you Marjory, do you not?"

"Yes, if you like," with a sigh and a blush.

Ellis looked at her for an instant, then, as if for the sake of speaking, he said lazily, "And so if you were a man, you would go in for a political career? As a woman, what is your ambition?"

"I have none," with another sigh.

"I can hardly believe that. A bright keen intelligence like yours is rarely without ambition. What is your scheme of life? All thinking creatures have schemes of life more or less distinct; yours naturally has the deepest interest for me;" and he looked at her.

"I do not think I have any. I do not care for fine dress or jewels or a grand house, though I like pretty things; but I do want to be happy, and not quite useless. I should like to travel, to—in short, I scarcely know what I want, except to be different from what I am." A deeper sigh and a downcast look emphasized the sentence.

"For different circumstances, perhaps, but I cannot echo your wish to be different from what you are."

Marjory made no reply, and Ellis, turning the conversation, talked lightly and pleasantly till the whist party broke up; and Marjory's last waking thoughts were, "How nice he can be! how much he knows about everything; I wonder he cares about me! and I wonder I do not care about him! If he had not this unpleasant notion of a secret marriage, I think I would marry him; though it would be rather awful to be really married to Mr. Ellis, and I am sure he would get tired of me."

* * * * *

Sunday dawned cold and dark and dreary, with low-lying clouds and a steady down-pour of rain; poor Marjory was fain to confess that it was impossible to keep a woodland tryst in such weather. She was very disconsolate and distressed, and even drew down a gentle reprimand upon her head from Aunt Carteret for making mistakes and leaving out words when reading the psalms and lessons, as going to church was not to be thought of.

After luncheon the party had assembled in the drawing-room, where a bright wood fire was crackling, and Miss Danvers (who had yielded to her friends' entreaties not to leave them till Tuesday) was detailing with much exactness the circumstances attending the purchase of a remarkable engraved emerald by her dear friend that delightful old Duca di San Marina, when she suddenly paused, and putting her lorgnette to her eyes, exclaimed, "Why, Mrs. Carteret, here is some enterprising visitor braving the elements to pay his respects to you."

"He must be a lunatic!" exclaimed Mr. Carteret.

"Perhaps it is Mr. Berry," suggested Mrs. Carteret.

"He certainly would not come over on foot from Gilston," said Ellis, rising to look out of the window. Marjory offered no suggestion, but flushed up and waited breathlessly for the result. Presently the door opened and Mr. Cranston was announced.

Marjory darted to meet him with outstretched hands, eager to save him so far as she could from the ordeal of advancing alone in face of so many strangers.

"I am so delighted you have come! I never expected you," she cried. "Dear Mrs. Carteret, this is my brother, Dick Cranston."

Dick, however, did not seem to need either encouragement or support, he coloured slightly through his embrowned skin, but bowed with great composure and said, "I should not have taken the liberty of calling but that I leave this neighbourhood tomorrow, and shall have no other chance of seeing Marjory again."

"I am very happy to see you," murmured Mrs. Carteret, rather bewildered.

"My uncle, Mr. Carteret," resumed Marjory with a slight gesture towards that potentate, her heart beating with pleasure and embarrassment. How was she to get Dick away from among these people? and they could not possibly talk before them. Here Ellis came forward, and offering his hand, observed, "We have met before, Mr. Cranston."

"Yes, I saw you at Beaulieu," returned Dick with his pleasant frank smile.

Marjory felt she could have hugged Ellis for this friendly move; it emboldened her to say, "May I take Dick into the library, Aunt Carteret? I want to hear all his news."

"By all means," returned Mrs. Carteret; and Marjory, with a quick "Come then," led the way to the scene of her labours.

"You really are a dear good boy to beard all these lions to see me. It must have been an effort," she exclaimed, seating herself at the writing-table and pointing to a large easy chair, which Dick drew forward.

"No, I did not much mind; I should not have intruded without a good reason; but I had a good one. I could not have gone away without seeing you, Marge, though I was scarcely sure you would like me to come."

"Like you to come! Why, Dick, I was ready to cry my eyes out when I saw the horrid rain, and I knew I could not go and meet you."

Dick smiled well pleased. "You are fonder of me than you used to be, Marge."

"And you are very ill-natured to remind me how unkind and nasty I used to be; you know I love you nearly as well as I love poor George, so do not be disagreeable. Now go on and tell me

everything, every single thing." She leant her elbows on the table and rested her chin on her hands, fixing her earnest eyes on his face.

"I sometimes think you are a couple of quite different girls in one, Marge; you are sometimes so much older and more womanly, and then again you are just the same sharp, saucy puss you were in the school-room at home."

"Ah! yes, I feel years older and graver, more troubled about the future, and—and changed in every way;" Marjory's varying face grew grave and dreamy, while a sudden sigh heaved her bosom. "But never mind me, tell me all about yourself."

After a brief pause, during which Dick sat very still with downcast eyes, he began his story of the fortnight which had passed since they had met. The chief event was a proposal from the architect to take him as clerk of the works to a building which was being erected from Mr. Jervis's designs near Hull. The original clerk of the works had resigned, as he wanted to join a brother in Australia, and Mr. Jervis at once spoke to Brand on the subject. "This is a step more in the direction of being a contractor than an architect," continued Dick, "and I should much prefer the latter, but you see I must live, and apprentices earn no wages, or next to none. I have very fair pay as clerk of the works, and may get opportunities of improving my architectural knowledge; anyway, I will be among stones and mortar, for which I have always had a passion as you know, and I see my way to independence, that is the great point."

"Yes, indeed, Dick. It seems like yesterday, that wild March evening when I came back from school and you walked in all covered with dust. You had just met your friend the mason."

"Ay, I think you brought me luck, Marge; and then when I saw you again I met Brand. That was the best of all, not that I think much of luck. The grand thing is to believe in oneself and to work with a will."

"I wish I could work for myself," said Marjory ruefully; "you are sure to get on, you will be a great rich man one day, while George and I——"

"Well, we will stick together anyhow. Now tell me your news."

"I have nothing good to tell. Uncle Carteret is about to sell this place or has sold it; they are going abroad, and I am to be sent back to Falkland Terrace. How pleasant that will be you may judge from this letter;" and she drew the obnoxious epistle from her pocket.

Dick read it in silence. "It is harsh enough," he said, returning it; "but it is not your father's composition."

"I know that, though it does not mend matters. Dick, if I go away to be a housemaid, I will not stay at home. I cannot live in the house with your mother."

"I believe it; but what can you do, Marge? girls cannot battle

with the world like men. Can you not persuade Mr. and Mrs. Carteret to keep you?"

"I have asked Mr. Carteret and he refused; I cannot humble myself a second time."

"There must be lots of rich childless old people, Marge, who would be glad to have you to read to them or write for them; you have a nice voice and you understand what you are reading about," said Dick earnestly, quite absorbed in the consideration of Marjory's future. "I wish I knew you were well employed and happy. Do you know, I often lie awake at night thinking of you and feeling sorry and ashamed that *my* mother should have struck in and spoiled your life. Look here, Marge, this is my address for the next three months, you must promise to write to me everything; and more, if you are in any trouble send for me. I'll come and help you cost what it may. You must promise, Marge." He held out his hand and she put hers into it.

"I do promise, that is, if you are not too far away. But I do not think I shall get into any trouble, at least not so bad as to want more than a little advice. You will write to me often, will you not?"

"I will. You know, as George, your real brother, is so far away, I must take his place."

"My real brother! Are you not my brother too?"

"Of course we shall always be like brother and sister, in our own minds, but I believe really we are no relations."

"Ah!" cried Marjory, "that is what Mr. Ellis says."

"Mr. Ellis! who is he? the fellow who shook hands with me in the drawing-room?" Marjory nodded. "Do you tell all your affairs to *him*?"

"No, not all. But it is a comfort to talk to some one sometimes. He is really very kind to me; and, Dick, he is rather a big man in his way, he knows so much, too, it is astonishing."

"Yes, he looks as if he were some one," returned Dick slowly, and then silence fell upon them. Marjory felt uneasy, Dick looked so grave, almost stern, and she was conscious of having coloured and hesitated when she spoke of Ellis. She would have liked to tell Dick everything, but that was quite impossible; she wanted to break the oppressive silence but no words would come, so she sat feeling and looking terribly conscious.

At last Dick said abruptly, "I do not like his face; I mean his expression."

"Nor did I," returned Marjory, relieved to be able to speak, "that is at first; now that I know him better, he seems——" she stopped.

"Quite handsome, I suppose," put in Dick with some sarcasm.

"No," returned Marjory steadily. "But he is the only creature here that has been really friendly and sympathetic, and I am obliged to him."

"That is natural enough," said Dick in an altered tone. "Well,

Marge, you see, that is, you will not think me a suspicious brute or a bore if I say it would be better not to have too much of his kindness or sympathy? You are a nice little thing."

"I am much obliged to you, but I am not so very little," this with dignity.

"Yes, yes! I daresay, Marge, I am making a fool of myself, but you see there's very little company or anything going on, and he might find it very pleasant to sympathize with you to a large amount; and you—you might miss his sympathy afterwards, and I can't bear to think of your being grieved, Marge, that is why I ventured——" he hesitated and broke down.

Marjory, with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes, made quick reply, "I understand what you want to say quite well; you mean to say that I am an insignificant frivolous girl, who will allow a man of higher position than myself to make an hour's amusement out of my vanity and leave me lamenting. But you are mistaken. Mr. Ellis is my kinsman, he says so himself; he is a man I never *could* take a fancy to, and to do him justice he has not the faintest idea of finding a passing amusement in flirting with *me*; he is as grave as—as a judge when he talks to me, and he treats me with more respect than *you* do." Here Marjory's fiery glances were dimmed with tears: "I did not think you could talk such nonsense, Dick, such unkind nonsense."

"You must not be angry with me," cried Dick, by no means convinced, but eager to make friends; "I am only a clumsy fellow, and I am too anxious about you to stop and think whether I should offend you or not. Don't cry, Marjory, this is the last talk we shall have together for many a day; don't quarrel with me, like a good girl; you are the only creature in the world I have to care about."

"Oh! I daresay you did not mean half you said," drying her eyes, "but you have wounded me, and all for nothing. I shall be leaving this soon, and then I shall never see Mr. Ellis again; nor do I care much, though I *am* grateful to him and always will be; but of course I don't care for him as I do for you. There! do not let us say any more on the subject; you can be very nice when you like, so do not be tiresome."

Dick looked at her wistfully for a minute, his heart too full of one subject to take up another easily.

"When do you start?" asked Marjory, generously helping him.

"The day after to-morrow."

"How can Mr. Brand spare you?"

"Well, the decorations we were working at together are all planned out and nearly finished; at any rate he would not let me lose a chance; but I cannot tell you how much I dislike leaving him, he has been so wonderfully kind to me; then I feel somehow that he will miss me greatly, and his health is very bad; I fancy he has taken a great deal out of himself."

"He looks ill, or looked ill the evening I saw him. He must have been handsome once," said Marjory reflectively.

"He is still at times, and he is a wonderfully pleasant companion, it is a treat to hear him talk when he is in the mood," said Dick. "Then he has such wonderful manners. If you saw him talking to Lord Beaulieu's sister, he is like a prince talking to a queen; and she never passes him anywhere, she always stops to speak with him, and the baby laughs and holds out its arms to him. I should like to know his history. He has been in good society, as it is called, some time or other."

"Yet Mrs. Acland spoke as if he had been a bad man," observed Marjory.

"He is not one now, at any rate; it does me good in many ways to be with him."

"Mrs. Maynard is beautiful and charming," murmured Marjory.

"She is a lovely woman! It is a pleasure to look at her," cried Dick enthusiastically. "What a gift beauty is! and her voice is so sweet! she often speaks to me. One day she said she was sure I was not in my natural place among workmen."

"And what did you say?" asked Marjory, deeply interested.

"Oh, I think I said, I hoped to do my work as well as if it *were* natural to me."

"That was as much as to say it was *not* natural to you."

Then their talk wandered to George and the chances of his return within the year. At last it was time to part.

"There is one thing I must impress on you, Marge, never mention that you have seen or heard anything of Brand. He particularly wishes our friendship to be kept dark."

"And of yourself?"

"What you like. I wrote to old Cross last week and told him what I am about. I gave him to understand he was at liberty to give the letter to Mr. Acland, so you can say what you like. Now I must leave you, and I hate having to say good-bye. You'll write to me, Marge? Tell me everything, and you shall hear of my doings if you care."

"If I care! of course I do. I wish you were not going, dear Dick, I am awfully lonely;" her voice broke, and she clasped his arm, lifting her face to his as if seeking a brotherly caress.

"God bless you, Marge, good-bye!" said Dick with much feeling in his deep rich tones, and, stooping, he kissed her gently on the brow. The next moment she was alone.

"You have been spoiling your eyes again," Ellis contrived to say under cover of an argument between Mr. Carteret, his wife and Miss Danvers that evening after dinner. "Had young Cranston anything tragic to communicate?"

"No; but I shall not see him for ever so long, and I shall have no one at home!"

"And you need not stay at home if you do not like it. Marjory,

I restrain myself from teasing you with the reiteration of my hopes and wishes, but do not forget I am waiting your decision all the same, and I love you with all my heart and soul!"

About a fortnight after this interview, Mr. Carteret gave the order to move; and Marjory was obliged to announce her return home for the following week. The house from this time became the haunt of various myrmidons of the house agent, who made inventories, packed up books and various articles selected for keeping, and infested the rooms.

Ellis, who had been more than once in town in the interim, was to leave for Paris, where he had succeeded in obtaining the appointment of *attaché*. Marjory observed that Mr. Carteret, who seemed in excellent spirits, was remarkably polite and friendly with his kinsman. She gathered, too, that the operation of cutting off the entail in order to sell the property had been accomplished, and the proceeds settled on the heir.

This was the business which had brought Ellis to Langford Priory and kept him there so long. It was a delicate affair to manage, and cost him both time and trouble. He was proud of his success, but another interest had come to mingle itself in his life, or rather a passion had seized him with unaccountable force.

Had it ever been foretold to Ellis that he would lose his head about an unformed, inexperienced school-girl, he would have laughed the prophet to scorn. He wondered at himself, for he never before had felt inclined to sacrifice any of his projects or ambitions to a woman; even now, though ready to run certain risks, he was more disposed to grasp all he wanted by a bold yet subtle scheme than to renounce an iota of his future plans. He was, as he boasted, master of himself, but not to the point of renunciation; rather he held his own will in check the better to concentrate his forces and carry out the design he had deliberately plotted.

Circumstances were peculiarly favourable, and could he but overcome Marjory's provoking distrust, a distrust which added an extraordinary attraction to the fresh intelligent sweetness of this young recluse, he saw his way to some years of delicious companionship, which would leave him free enough, yet not cost her anything beyond temporary seclusion. What a pity it was that women should clamour for equal rights and make themselves intolerable burdens. A wife *sub rosa*, with all the charm of illegitimate secrecy about her, would be quite fascinating; while some unceremonious form more or less binding ought to be quite enough to satisfy her scruples and secure her self-respect.

The day before Ellis was to leave the Priory, Marjory walked over to Dene Court to bid farewell to the friendly heiress and her mouse-like little mother. It was a pleasant visit and cheered the young secretary not a little.

Returning, she was not altogether surprised to overtake Ellis

loitering at a bend in the road where a path struck off through an angle of the Beaulieu woods and shortened the distance to the Priory.

"I have been on thorns for the last quarter of an hour lest I should miss you," he said. "This is my last chance of seeing you alone for the present, and you need not walk so fast!"

"Ah! Mr. Ellis," began Marjory eagerly, and then stopped short.

"Why do you check your impulse to speak to me out of the fulness of your heart? I think I deserve your confidence."

"You know why," returned Marjory, determined to be brave and candid. "You have been so good as to care for me, and—and I am always afraid of misleading you. It is not worth your while to risk anything for me, and I will not risk anything for you. You are going to Paris, where you will be busy and see nice people; in a little while you will wonder you ever troubled about me."

"You think so?" and Ellis laughed a somewhat harsh laugh. "I almost wish I could! No, Marjory, I am not going to let you slip from me; I have not quite matured my plans, but I shall see you in London before long, as I shall have leave of absence for some weeks, and then I shall seek you in your father's house."

"I hope you will not, Mr. Ellis; Mrs. Acland would be sure to make mischief of your visit."

"Do you not think me capable of out-manceuvring Mrs. Acland? If I come, shall you be glad to see me?"

"Oh! I shall indeed! A friendly face will be something delightful in *that* house," cried Marjory with an irrepressible burst of feeling.

"If you dread your stepmother so much, why are you reluctant to exchange her tyranny for my protection?"

"Well, you see," hesitating a little, "I am not *married* to her, Mr. Ellis."

He laughed: "I understand, you cautious little witch. Perhaps after a week or two of home life you may take a different view. Believe me, I could make existence very pleasant for you. Tell me, is your chief objection the concealment that must shroud the first year or two of our marriage?"

"It is," said Marjory frankly. "But I must be truthful, and, indeed, I do not love you, Mr. Ellis, though I like you and am grateful to you."

Ellis did not reply for a few minutes and then began to speak of the many pleasures a life with him would offer, even during the time that must elapse before he could make their union public. Soon—too soon, he thought—they came to the edge of the Priory grounds. Marjory paused.

"It must be good-bye then," said Ellis; "to-morrow we shall be *en évidence*." He took her hand in both his, looking earnestly into her eyes. "You do not care, eh? You heartless girl," smiling and kissing the hand he held, "you do not dream how hard it is to

be satisfied with *this* when I long for a parting kiss from that sweet mouth ! You need not start and struggle to get away ; *nothing* would tempt me to offend you. Some day, when you are my wife, you will wonder you ever refused me."

"No, Mr. Ellis, I never shall," cried Marjory, blushing and trembling as she slipped away her hand and fled rapidly to the house.

"She is not quite so indifferent as she thinks," murmured Ellis, following slowly ; "time and determination will win at last."

(*To be continued.*)

ROMANTIC EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF LOUISE LA VALLIÈRE.

By WILTON WOLRIGE.

“QUAND j’aurai de la peine aux Carmélites je me souviendrai de ce que ces gens là m’ont fait souffrir,” said the hapless Louise when her heart was nigh unto breaking.

What anguish of mind and contemptuous flouts had she not suffered before such pathetic words fell from her saddened lips!

The sentence, addressed as it was to the woman who was destined to be her last rival in the affections of Louis of Bourbon, Madame de Maintenon, had reference without doubt not only to her fickle kingly lover and Madame de Montespan, but also to the courtiers who had bowed themselves at her feet in fawning flattery in the days of her prosperity, wrangled for the honour of riding at her chariot wheels, written poetic nothings upon her charms and graces, and deemed her no less than angel, until the idol fell ruthlessly, displaced from its niche to yield its room to a fairer, fresher divinity, or in any case a more seductive one, who had wiled away the fancy of the *Grand Monarque*. Courtly Massillon himself could not have preached a more potent sermon upon the uncertainty of life and its future than did Mademoiselle La Vallière in that short and plaintive sentence. Few kings indeed have experienced the felicity of being loved for their own selves; yet without a doubt, of the many exceptional blessings bestowed upon Louis XIV. the purity of the affection of Louise La Vallière was one of the rarest.

Certain it is that of the many who jostled and cringed and bowed devotion to the great king, but one among them all possessed a passion for him which absorbed her being and rendered her dead to worldly wisdom and ambition.

Her love for him was the first and last of her life.

Was it possible that Louis, the all-conquering, when he powdered his six-inch wig with gold dust, managed to throw somewhat of it in the dazzled eyes of his mistress?

To her he was as the sun in her social sky, and the world for her held but him and him alone; while for ourselves we see Louis stripped of his cinnamon-coloured coat, embroidered as it was with diamonds, bereft of his red-heeled shoes which added some four good inches to his height, and without the afore-mentioned

six-inch wig; see him a mortal of five feet two, denuded of his fripperies, and to us he appears as he was, more or less heartless, not altogether bad, yet of indifferent virtues, his growth stunted, his brain not over gifted with brilliant talents, and certainly possessed in himself of but doubtful moral and physical courage.

And yet, "Dieu seul est grand," said Massillon; but somehow we infer that next to Him—so thought the worthy prelate and the court too for the matter of that—came His vice-gerent here upon earth, Louis the grand, the invincible, the wise, the conquering, the terror of his enemies and the admiration of the universe.

And if he appeared thus to mankind at large, Louise may well be pardoned for believing him to be greater yet in her love for him.

To give her her full title, Louise Françoise de la Baume le Blanc de la Vallière was born on the 6th August, 1644, in the country of Agnes Sorel, not far from that Chambord where we remember Francis I. created duchesses by the grace of love. She belonged to a distinguished family, who came originally from the Bourbon stock, and who were established in Tours. Her mother marrying a second time, gave her a stepfather, M. de St. Reni, who was comptroller of the household of the Duke of Orleans.

She was brought up in the court of this prince, and resided successively at Orleans and at Blois.

All her memoirs accord harmoniously in their references to her character for gentleness, her generosity and goodness, which traits were remarkable from her earliest years, combined with a wisdom as unworldly as it was unexpected when found in connection with a woman in her position of power in such an age at once so profligate and luxurious. Regarding her personal appearance the Duchess of Orleans (Elizabeth Charlotte) declared that to her the blue eyes of Louise outshone in their beauty those of Madame de Montespan, and that her whole appearance was that of modesty itself.

The Abbé de Choisy says in his memoirs, "In childhood we have played together a hundred times," and he thus describes her. "She was not," he says, "one of those perfect beauties that one often admires without loving."

La Fontaine's words seemed written for her, "a grace more beautiful even than beauty's self."

Her complexion was very fair and tinged with the bloom of a wild rose, her hair almost flaxen, her blue eyes full of sweetness, her features being however slightly marked with the small-pox. In figure she was slight and graceful, but her walk was marred by a lameness which though insignificant was palpable.

"Her history disdains notes and commentaries, it is the eternal legend of love," avows M. Arsène Houssaye, when he finds it impossible to trace the *mot-à-mot* history of Louise's youth. Of her love affair many incidents are given as to her first meeting

with the king, but the most trustworthy and more generally accepted tradition is, that she and Louis were introduced to each other under the following circumstances: the young king—twenty-four at most—was strolling in the gardens at Fontainebleau, accompanied by two courtiers, Monsieur Guiche and Monsieur Beringhem.

They observed three young ladies also sauntering about the grounds in the cool of the evening, and that the girls strayed to a statue of Diana, where they halted and sat down.

De Beringhem remarked to the king that very possibly these three friends had come to chat over their favourite court gallants, and proposed that they should creep nearer behind the friendly shrubs, and so doing listen unobserved.

The three fair girls were Mademoiselle de Chemerault, Mademoiselle de Pons and Louise herself, who met destiny that evening in the form of the king. From the first he had been to her an object of the most sincere admiration. She was but eighteen, and though she had only seen him amid all the pride and circumstance and pomp of court life, she had endowed him in her heart with every virtue, and enshrined him as hero in the imaginative glory of her love.

Up to the time of the evening in the gardens at Fontainebleau it is understood that the king had never noticed her apart from the rest of the bevy of fair maidens who clustered around the French court, as, indeed, how should he, a simple modest girl amid a bevy of maids of honour.

The king and his companions advanced yet nearer to where the maidens sat.

Said one, pointing to the statue where it stood bathed in the moonlight:

“I have always loved Diana”—this was Louise.

Mademoiselle de Chemerault responded by declaring in preference that she admired Endymion.

“You are two stupid,” said Mademoiselle de Pons; “you like fabulous personages, but I prefer real ones.”

“Whom do you love, then?” demanded Mademoiselle de Chemerault; a question which entailed some lively chatter and girlish banter which was no doubt vastly edifying to the ears of Louis and his courtiers. Now the Count de Guiche had been an ardent admirer of Louise, and her companions rallied her upon the subject of his devotion.

The king crept closer as the conversation took a more pointed turn, and his vanity was fully fed by hearing Louise, after much questioning and contradiction, declare that while the king himself was present he was the only man upon whom her eyes loved to dwell.

“Is there any man,” asked she with girlish enthusiasm, “who can compare with him in the ballet?”

It is well known that Louis of Bourbon indulged in this pastime till the age of thirty-six.

"I see," observed Mademoiselle de Chemerault, "the king pleases you because he is the king."

"On the contrary," retorted Mademoiselle La Vallière, "it is the crown that spoils him, since it takes him from the number of those whom we could love. Ah! if he were only not a king."

Upon hearing such beguiling flattery, which was assuredly too innocently meant to bear the interpretation which the eavesdroppers put upon it, Louis the gallant felt he could do no less than come forth from his hiding-place and throw himself at the feet of the fair maid of honour.

The consternation caused in this council of three upon the discovery that they had been overheard by the sovereign may be easily imagined; they fled on the instant, like startled leverets.

"Ah!" exclaimed Louis, as they disappeared, "she will not love a king. Well, she shall love a lover."

To his annoyance he discovered that the Count and M. de Beringhem had also formed an audience to the little scene. Guiche, as it may be imagined, felt no small chagrin at having heard his love despised in girlish pleasantry.

"Who is that girl?" inquired the king; and Guiche, to hide his vexation and discomfiture, declared he did not know.

"My dear count," came the good-natured reply, "you did not know her, but you loved her."

Louis, determined to find out his young admirer, sought her among the queen's attendants, but did not recognize the fair maid of honour.

Anon, he went to seek among those of Madame.

"That is she," he told himself when Louise La Vallière read aloud a romance of Mademoiselle de Scudéri.

Doubtless he heard but little of the tale itself, but he remained the whole evening and became a constant visitor.

There is no doubt that the best love of his life was given to Louise in all its entirety.

We are told that for a whole long month he scarcely dared to approach, or even to speak to her save through the medium of his eyes, which most probably were eloquence itself.

But a crisis was speedily reached. One day, in the park of Vincennes, a heavy shower dispersed the court. Louise's slight impediment in her walk may have detained her, and the king have seized upon so excellent an opportunity, who can say?

Certain it is that he overtook her. "My heart was expecting this shower," he said, turning pale with emotion; "do you not know that I love you, madame?"

"Chut! or I shall hear you," Louise replied in blushing confusion.

The king by a hasty movement let her hand fall into his own,

and then in a torrent he poured forth upon the moment all his feelings, his hopes and his fears.

Down came the rain, but he recked little of that, and the interview lasted an hour.

"Does not your majesty see that I am wet through?" she asked.

"Count the drops of rain," said King Louis, "and I will swear to give you as many pearls."

"I was only surprised at one thing," said Beringhem at a later period, "and that was that the two lovers were not metamorphosed into a Triton and a Naiad."

How should he, the daily companion of the king, possess a doubt as to how such a fancy bred in the heart of such a sovereign should end.

That Louis XIV. did love Louise with the purest love of which he was capable is perfectly evident; but when did not an utterly *blasé* man become weary in time of a woman who only knew how to love?

Her successor, Madame de Montespan, possessed an advantage over her displaced rival, for to her belonged that dangerous seduction of one who, if she did not love, yet knew how to make herself beloved. That Louis was just and kind to the children of Louise La Vallière is well known, and also that he was sincerely fond of them.

There were two, Mademoiselle de Blois and the Duke of Vermandois.

The pathetic love story of La Vallière comes to us like a breath of her own favourite emblem, the violet, amid all the artificial pomp and glare of the court of the *Grand Monarque*.

Mademoiselle La Vallière, writes the Academician, sanctified her love by her repentance. It was a saying of a father of the Church that it is more easy to find many men who have preferred their innocency from their baptism upwards, and kept it spotless, than to meet with one sincere and hearty penitent. Because so few are converted as they ought to be.

And if the whole Church stood amazed at the conversion of a prince whose devotion was not surpassed by the austere votaries of the times in which he lived, we have no less reason to admire this in a lady who seemed singled out from a debauched age and the affluence of all sinful pleasures to be a miracle of penitence.

It is easy to judge by her pious reflections, gathered from her private papers, and made public about the year 1684, and which were written by Louise after her retirement from the court and recovery from a violent attack of illness, that her soul was deeply impregnated by the divine love.

In one of these papers she avows herself as contemplating the world much as the scene of a comedy when those persons who have slumbered in the audience are aroused at the end of the

act, and stand bewildered that when wakened from their dream they find the gaudy apparitions are vanished, and that nothing remains but dust and smoke.

In another she bewails in deep humility the mirth which "cost her her soul and the favour of her God;" but we are told that in all her power she was never presumptuous, and that her hand was always ready to bind up the broken-hearted and to give alms to the poor. Had she not possessed many virtues would the queen herself have been as fondly tolerant of her as she was?

"Will it be any recompense to employ the remainder of that time in Thy service which hitherto has been spent in affronting Thy Majesty?" she asks prayerfully when arguments are used to induce her to return to court from her temporary seclusion; "or will the divorcing those unlawful pleasures to which I have formerly been wedded satisfy Thy justice and blot out my transgressions?"

She wrestles for power to put away from her her darling sin:

"Oh! let me never forget," she cries, "that dreadful hour when Thou callest me to an account for my sins, when I beheld death ready to seize upon my soul and carry it away into everlasting torments, and let Thy infinite compassion be deeply engraven upon my memory, which in the midst of judgment did remember mercy, and rescue me from Thy fiery indignation."

The compiler gives these little volumes of her reflections to the world with the assurance that they are the most sincere and affecting models of a true conversion that have ever been penned.

Very probably out of mere respect to the modesty and humility of Louise La Vallière, these private papers containing her expressions of remorse would never have seen the light had they not been conveyed away from the convent by a lady "who esteemed it a great piece of injustice to withhold so profitable a help from those poor souls who are desirous to reform their lives and bid adieu to their vicious conversations," so the preface informs us; but there appears no clue as to this lady's identity.

"Look with compassion," implores Louise, previous to her return to court, "upon a poor sinner, tormented with the flames of an unlawful passion, who, like the Samaritan woman, begs one drop of living water to quench the fervour of her soul and her thirst after sin."

Shall we believe that this appeal was unanswered? Rather let us think that strength sustained her which was not of this earth, to endure the bitterness of her return to a circle which was led by her rival, who, strange to understand, was eager to welcome her back with every protestation of delight.

Madame de Montespan must either have been absolutely sure of her sway over the vain mind of the king, or glad to vaunt her triumph in the face of her almost fallen rival.

As for the king, he was not at this time so tired of La Vallière

that he was altogether pleased with her withdrawal from the court, but though glad of her return from the convent he had suggested a separate establishment for the duchess, and she felt that it was but the beginning of the end.

When they brought her a portrait of the king she turned from it with a bitter smile. "That is all that remains to me of him," she said; "a portrait! and even when it was painted he was not thinking of me, for I do not recognize his look."

The Duke of Longueville at this time made overtures of marriage, and the king, though not over loving, was very easily jealous.

He charged Louise with the intention of accepting the duke's proposal.

"Sire!" she exclaimed, throwing herself into his arms, "I repeat it once again, before the king there was Heaven, after the king there shall be only Heaven."

The 18th of July, 1668, rang the death-knell of her love.

It was the occasion of a festivity given to the *blonde amoureuse* upon the conclusion of the war.

It cost who shall say how many thousand of francs and its splendour was spoken of for above half a century, but the morning of that day broke darkly for Louise la Vallière.

Madame de Montespan met the king in that labyrinth through which his earlier love had so often passed in the dews of the morning to meet him.

"What! So early out?" asked King Louis.

"Is not the sun arisen?" replied the politic marchioness, and the twain continued their walk until interrupted by Mademoiselle d'Artigny.

People rose early in those days, as the gardener at Fontainebleau, who cherished his best roses to gain words of praise from Louise, could aver.

Widely different were the worthy man's feelings for the divine Athenais who tore his flowers leaf by leaf and petal by petal.

And in those years—seven long weary years, ye gods!—the heart of the hapless La Vallière was racked by the consciousness that from her frail grasp was slipping that for which she would have paid with what was dearer even than life itself to her then, her hope of Heaven, poor gentle Louise! so that she might keep entire the love of the king. His first cool rebuff cut her to the heart. It was before the festivity just mentioned; the war was over, and the *Grand Monarque*, whether eager for distraction after the more serious business of battle, or anxious to be surrounded once again by his curious *ménage*, sent for the court, and Louise, delighted in eager obedience to welcome him back, was the first to greet him.

"What, madame, before the queen!" was his stern reproof, the first he had offered her, and surely too deep a wound to have

inflicted upon her gentle heart for the affront of having learned of him the art of loving him, not wisely, but too well.

A more unassuming being than the duchess in all probability has rarely if ever existed; indeed in earlier days, when Louis, with but little respect for her modesty, courted publicity, it was she, retiring as the violet, her especial emblem and favourite flower, who endeavoured to stamp down smouldering scandal with her little feet, lest some day it should burst into a flame which should consume her.

As gradually she fell from her pinnacle of power, her whilom worshippers discovered that her limping walk was an absolute deformity and that her slightly wide, but sweet and expressive mouth was an unbearable monstrosity.

'Tis the way of more worlds than the French one, and no less could be expected of a court belonging to a nation who applauded Marie Antoinette on her accession as loudly as they booed and jeered and girded at her for being an aristocrat and called her "Widow Capet" on her way to the scaffold which they had erected for the beautiful Austrian.

Before joining the order of Carmelites she made a last effort and appeal to the king.

"Sire," she said, "I am dying with grief, Heaven alone can console me for your cruelties."

"May Heaven be with you," said the king dryly; "we cannot always move in the same circle; your heart loves nothing but gloom: as to me I like fine weather."

There could be no appeal further made to a lover so absolutely cold.

The fire of his love which had burned with such vigour was none the less a dead thing now that the fuel was exhausted and its ashes raked out on to a chill hearth.

Madame de Maintenon, who had arrived at court, strove to dissuade her from thus immuring herself.

"You do not know all the suffering and renunciation of the world where God does not always come," she said to Louise.

The duchess smiled in her bitterness of spirit, replying, "Ah, madame, when I suffer among the good Carmelites I will remind myself of all that those people have made me suffer here."

The two ladies stood at an upper window of the palace, and La Vallière pointed a trembling finger to where her erstwhile royal lover and the Marchioness of Montespan might be seen entering their carriage.

At length, on the 20th April, 1674, Louise threw herself at the feet of the queen, implored forgiveness as she kissed her hand, received a pardon freely given, and hastened down to the carriage which waited below to convey her to the convent of the Carmelites in the Faubourg St. Jacques. Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan meanwhile contemplated the scene from an upper

window with as much unconcern as though it had been a comedy or farce rather than the last act in the life-tragedy of a heart-broken favourite.

All Paris, eager alike for guillotine or carnival, gathered at the doors and windows along the route to see the fallen beauty pass to her living tomb. The streets themselves were literally thronged with spectators.

As the unhappy woman entered the convent she threw herself upon her knees before La Mère Claire du Saint Sacrement.

"Ma mère," she cried, "I have always made so bad a use of my will that I come to place it in your hands never to resume it."

"My daughter, it is to Heaven alone that you must speak thus," said the holy mother as she received her.

"Ah, madame," said Mademoiselle d'Eperon, "Heaven will take into account the sacrifice of so much beauty."

On the afternoon of the same day that adorable head of flaxen hair which had so often been caressed by royal hands fell severed in long curling tresses upon the stone pavement.

It is said that La Vallière looked down upon it with a sigh of half regret and left it there as though with it she put aside the rest of earth's vanities for ever; and yet, novice though she was, her love for Louis, broken and saddened, remained.

"Let me not flatter myself," is her cry from the convent of the Carmélites, "that I have mortified my passions, for I find them revive in me with more strength than ever, and induce me to self-love, which is the more dangerous because by justifying these irregular motions it renders me deaf to the dictates of my reason and the holy inspirations of Thy grace."

She implores for :

"A heart which for the love of Thee will deny itself when there is any competition between the creature and the Creator, which will silence all the importunities of nature, that it may become the more obedient to the voice of Thy grace. By that love which has taught me by experience that there is nothing in this world worthy my friendship, nothing but continual troubles and base ingratitude, which has discovered to me by these gentle corrections that Thou art a jealous God and requirest the sacrifice of my whole heart unto Thee in acknowledgment of Thy infinite mercies, my infidelity and the sacrilegious misplacing of my affections." She lived for thirty-six years within the walls of the convent, one of the most humble of its penitents.

After an initiation of a year, Louise de la Vallière took the veil; and, oh, irony of fate, the whole court was present to witness the imposing ceremony or rather the fresh sacrifice.

The king alone was not present, but Mesdames Maintenon and Montespan were there in their pride and beauty. Says M. Houssaye, "It was always at the convent that the king's loves

ended." Mademoiselle d'Argencourt of the house of Conti was the first victim.

Little is said of her, but we know that her place of retreat from the world that had tired of her was the convent of Ste. Marie de Chaillot.

And yet we call the lover of La Vallière the *Grand Monarque*, the magnanimous, the admiration of his circle, and what not else in terms of flattery.

In the awful year of 1793, the rabble crowds that had violated the tomb of her king and lover passed on to the burial place of the Carmelites and searched the grave of La Vallière in hopes of finding jewels, but they discovered nothing beyond the ebony crucifix laid upon her repentant bosom just as it had been when she yielded her spirit to Him who gave it.

But one more anecdote to prove how her intense and pathetic love remained with her for Louis even to the last.

Seeing one day a sister of her order stooping down to drink from a well while she formed a cup for the water with her hands, she reminded herself with sudden anguish of an incident which took place in the forest of Fontainebleau, when her royal lover himself had drunk out of her palms, declaring with ardent affection that the water itself was converted into wine.

Sister Louise tortured her poor weary heart by retrospect such as this, and, so the story goes, kept the vow she then made never to drink again.

Her humility in preparing to take the sacrament is very touching. She writes, "I would say inspire me by that grace with the self-same disposition with which the poor Canaanite prostrated herself at Thy feet. Look upon me, O Lord, whilst I approach unto Thee as Thou didst upon that humble stranger; I would say as a poor dog who is sufficiently happy when permitted to lick up the crumbs which fall from the table where Thou featest Thine elect."

Penitence such as this needs no trite comment; if any may, in conclusion, be considered necessary, it is best supplied, yet once again, in her own words. She appeals to a higher tribunal than that of man.

"Thou," she says, from between the cold grey walls of her convent cell, "Thou wilt judge me by those truths which notwithstanding my corruption have pierced to the bottom of my soul, by that remorse which Thou didst mingle with my most criminal pleasures, thereby to recall my heart. But, alas! I always stifled them, that I might the more freely abandon myself to my passions. Those lying vanities!

"And lastly, O my God, 'tis by the book of my conscience and not that of my ghostly guide by which Thou wilt give sentence upon that terrible day when Thou wilt pronounce my eternal doom."

“JERRY.”

BY THE AUTHOR OF “MOLLY BAWN,”

“PHYLLIS,” “LADY BRANKSMERE,” ETC.

HE was starving! Not hungry as you or I might be, had we fasted for ten or twelve hours at a stretch, but literally dying for want of food. He lay back in the dingy doorway exhausted, half unconscious, his one friend clasped to his breast. His face was dirty and of a leaden hue, the lips a pale purple, and his hands were as the claws of some untamed thing.

Heavily fell the rain upon the darkening street; the chill, bitter fog of the December night grew momentarily deeper, and through it the raindrops pushed their way sluggishly. Little Jerry, lying in the comfortless shade of the dull doorway, scarcely heeded how the moisture came that saturated the wretched rags that clothed his frame.

For two long days no food had passed his lips. The deadly fever that had seized on him a fortnight ago, whilst with him, had killed the sense of hunger, but yesterday it had left him, just at the break of dawn, and with its going had come a wild craving for food of some—of *any* sort. Wearily he had lifted his tired little head from the miserable pillow of damp sacking that supported it to ask in feeble tones for drink, for meat, to find himself in that darksome cellar alone!

It was a horrible shock to the child. He had lain unconscious, caught by the fever's deadly clutch, whilst the woman with whom he had lived ever since he could remember anything had succumbed to that same fever's influence, and had died and been buried. A miserable drunken creature, in a way kind to him when sober, brutal to him when gin overpowered her, but as she was, the only protector he knew. Whether she was his mother, or whether fate had just drifted him into her path the child never knew, but the sense that she was lost to him for ever filled him with an awful dread. He knew it when no voice answered his in the early gloom of that winter's morning, when his parched tongue had cried aloud without response. When he had dragged his worn limbs to the pallet where she used to lie and found she was no longer there, weak as he was and crushed by this sudden knowledge, he hurried back to his own bed, and with nervous, feverish hands sought there for something that in his terrified

haste he could not find. He whistled in a sobbing fashion, and at last, languidly, a tiny shaggy soft thing crept to him and sought his arms, and with the puppy, his only and most passionately prized possession in his arms, he groped his way to the door and found himself upon the street just as the first faint streaks of dawn grew in the sullen east.

That was yesterday. He had met a slattern on emerging from his lair and had stayed her to ask eagerly, piteously :

"Where is mum?" and she had answered :

"Ye've the right to ask—y've! After given 'er the fever as killed her. Get along wi' ye, ye young varmint."

He got along, and all day, oppressed with the weight of the idea that he had killed that woman, and oppressed, too, by the weakness that held him as its prey, he sat in shaded doorways or gaunt archways, hardly knowing that the demon hunger was gnawing at him. Not heeding either, because hardly able to bear the whinings of the starving puppy he held to him with such a tenacious grasp.

But as the next day broke he knew that he wanted food, and a sickening desire for it arose within him. But how to get it! In all that big, great city of London, who was there to give meat to this poor stricken lamb? Not one! It was nobody's business! Many men, good men and true, were they *sure* he was starving, could they *see* him, was his miserable case placed exactly beneath their benevolent noses, would I know have given him sufficient to keep him in clover for the rest of his life. But then it takes so long to bring these miserable cases beneath the noses of the benevolent ones, that myriads die whilst the attempt is being made, and only one out of the many is saved.

It seemed to him that he must have dozed a while, as when next his dim eyes looked with discernment upon the world, the darkness of night was falling. The rain, too, was heavier, and through it the lamps that lit the wretched by-street where he crouched, shone with a lurid light.

The little dog was dead, but the child did not know it. I am always glad to think he did not know that. He held it still fondly, convulsively clasped to his breast, and as the body was yet warm it did not dawn upon his dulled mind that life was gone from it. He sat quite still, his head drooping somewhat forward, and one could see that his face *might* have been pretty but for the stamp of death present, and of misery, now nearly passed, that disfigured it.

By-and-by, as he still sat there faint and sick because of the ravening and gnawing feeling within him, a young man came swinging down the dingy street—a young man, gaunt to emaciation, with hollow cheeks and deep-set eyes, and altogether a face suggestive of famine. It was not a good face! The devil had planted a line here and there in it—cynical curves round the thin lips, a mocking light in the eyes, a matured expression of scorn

towards the world in general. He looked as if he were always carrying on a bitter warfare with his kind.

His clothes were threadbare, his hat shocking. Beneath his arm he hugged a handful of shabby books as if his very soul (although he would have scorned a belief in one) was centred on them. As indeed it was. A student evidently; out at elbows, penniless.

"Eh! what have we here?" said he, stopping abruptly before the half insensible boy and poking him with his stick. "Another starveling! Come, speak up, child; what ails you, eh?"

Roused by this rude address and dreading all things, Jerry lifted his dull eyes and turned a suppliant smile upon his questioner. It was a woful little smile, entreating, imploring, and openly deprecating the blow that he so plainly expected. All his poor little life long, blows had been his portion.

"So!" said the evil-looking young man with a sinister smile, "starving, eh? I was right, then!" He stared at the child as if musing. "Here, before one, lies a distinct atom of the vast mysterious whole. Here too lies a striking example of the absolute truthfulness of that charming little fable so sweet to the well-fed good man's ear. The Divine mercy! The everlasting love that will not let so much as one sparrow fall to the ground—to which the little ones are so specially dear! Here, I say, is an admirable illustration of it—a woodcut, let us say, an insignificant etching," with a glance at the miserably shrunken little frame of the child at his feet. He laughed aloud; a laugh that cut like a bit of cold cruel steel into the heart of the cowering boy. Was the blow coming now?

"You'll die if you don't look sharp," said the strange man after another prolonged glance at him, followed by a shrug. He thrust his hand into his pocket and brought out three coppers and a six-penny bit. "Here, catch!" said he, chucking the sixpence to the boy, who by a superhuman effort caught it, and then turned a glance of passionate gratitude up to his unknown friend.

"Don't," said the latter with his unpleasant laugh. "I expect I've done you the worst turn of any. It was a gross liberty on my part to seek to prolong your days. You will fling that sixpence into the nearest gutter if you have a grain of sense; if not, make it last for two days. It is more than I shall have to live upon for that time." He paused and then said abruptly, "There's a shop round the corner."

The boy had dragged himself up by the lintel of the door with a view to thanking him properly in spite of his contemptuous prohibition, but with his last words the young man flung himself round and into the middle of the passing crowd, carrying his eager, wild, accusing face into the turmoil of the great city.

Jerry, still hugging to his breast the dead dog, moved slowly and painfully down the street, turned the corner, and stopped at

last before the lighted windows of the cookshop to which he had been directed. A delicious perfume came from the open door, the window, aglow with gas, showed dainties so coarse to you or me, but so delicate to the famished boy that he almost fainted at the sight of them. For a minute or two he let his gaze feast itself upon the rich display, and then slowly opened his dirty emaciated little hand to look at the talisman that should give him his share of the good things he craved. His silver sixpence lay upon his palm, and the child's eyes grew bright again, half conquering the death-sleep that had so nearly closed them only now, as he stared at it. A whole, *whole* sixpence!

Alas! two other eyes beheld that sixpence at the same moment. A great, rough, villainous-looking creature, half boy, half man, peered over the child's shoulder, saw the coin, stooped yet a little nearer as a hawk above its prey, and then the little dirty palm was empty, the blessed life-giving money *gone*!

Poor Jerry! A sensation as of a deadly chill ran through him, and for a moment he reeled heavily against the bars of the window. But after that it seemed to him that he thought no more of it, he gave in, and though not conscious of the fact, quietly surrendered himself to death. It was all over. No hope, no life—*nothing* was left! Perhaps, indeed, he scarcely knew how things went with him for awhile, but instinct at least led his dying footsteps back to the old horrible home—the loathsome cellar in the squalid court. With faltering feet, with a dull stupid despair upon his half-dead little face, with the now cold and stiff puppy pressed to his heart, he descended the stone steps, and like a wild thing stricken sore, sought his lair.

Inside all was still, all was dark. A horrible silence prevailed, a very blackness of darkness that might be felt. He began to be frightened, horribly frightened. He put the dog down and pressed the palms of his hands tight—*tight* against his eyeballs that he might not see the gruesome shapes of which the dread gloom seemed full. Teeming shapes that changed ever and ever, and drew nearer, and touched him as he thought—sometimes his hair, and now—ah!—now his cheek.

And then the harsh racking cough, that had been his for a twelve-month, caught him, and shook his thin little frame so roughly in its rude grasp that he had to take down his hands from his eyes to press them to that side where the pain was most cruel; but he still kept his eyes fast closed lest he should see those weird awful creatures dancing here and there in the obscurity.

He was cold—so cold! He shivered and shook with terror, and with something else:—that last dread icy chill that every moment crept closer and closer to his heart. And after awhile he sat down and let himself fall quietly backwards until his poor tired head lay upon the damp pavement. He put out a feeble hand, and finding the dead dog, mechanically drew it nearer to him.

And then a wonderful thing happened! All at once the cellar, it seemed to him, grew full of light! A light, strange, awful, marvellous, such as you and I have never yet seen. And in it stood—One!

A most gracious figure! Tall, a little bowed, and clad in a long garment, than which no snow, freshly fallen, was ever half so white. And the face—who shall tell the divine fairness of it?

Little Jerry could not have described it then, but as he gazed on it, he knew all at once the fullest meaning of the words "Love" and "Peace" and "Rest."

And the figure stooped and gathered to his breast the little frozen boy, and suddenly a soft delicious glow ran through his numbed veins. And Jerry let his tired head fall gently back against that tender bosom.

And heavier and heavier grew the weary limbs, and then suddenly, oh, so light! and presently he felt himself lifted up—ever upwards—and carried away—away.

And never more did little Jerry know cold or hunger or fear or despair, and never again did darkness trouble him, for

"There shall be no night there."

AWAKENED.

You touched the harp of my life, and the music is echoing still,
Swift to your summons electric answered the tensionless strings,
Swift leapt each trembling chord at the power of your magic will,
Swift soared each glad vibration on Love's untiring wings.

And the melodies linger yet in the fevered and stormy air,
I hear them, clear as of old, through the rush and whirl of the
days,
I hear—and my pulses thrill with a voiceless, yearning prayer,
And the stream of my thoughts flows back down the old sweet
haunted ways.

Deep in my soul's hidden mirrors your features reflected shine ;
Flooding the darkness around with their glorious living light,
Centre and source of delight, whence shoot through these veins of
mine,
Rays that like lava burn and like heaven are infinite.

By that touch, by that waking murmur, you have changed the
world for me,
Bathed all its manifold beauties in one bright, living glow,
Blended all earthly sounds in one vast harmony,
Through which love's wordless pæans in tremulous minors flow.

The ring of your laughter lingers in the night-wind's fitful sighs,
The spell of your presence hovers by the moonbeams' silver bars ;
Between me and the starlight I see your eyes arise
Resplendent in the azure, like nearer, tenderer stars.

Will it be so for ever ? When this joyous heart is cold,
When I pass to that Elysium that no mortal feet have trod,
Shall I still look back in longing, still be by your will controlled ?
Will you in that mystic dawning stand between my soul and
God ?

MARIE CONNOR.

FISHING IN NORWAY.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT,"
"STRAIGHT AS A DIE," ETC., ETC.

SPORTSMEN now-a-days have to go far afield in order to pursue their favourite amusements. The highlands of Scotland have long since been overcrowded. Ireland and Wales share a similar fate, and as population increases, year by year it becomes more and more evident that fresh pleasure-grounds must be sought. Even Iceland and Canada are not considered too remote by ardent anglers; but, perhaps, the most frequented country of any is Norway.

Some ten or fifteen years ago it was comparatively a little-visited land. Now, thanks to the improved communication, it threatens to become over-run by tourists out for their annual holiday; whilst almost without exception, every river of any size or importance is in the hands of Englishmen. Those who came first were lucky enough to secure them at moderate rentals and on long leases. The Norwegian farmer looks down with contempt on the precarious pastime of fly-fishing, and when he wants a salmon, prefers to resort to his trap—a series of wooden piles, box-like in shape, driven into the river bed, and with an ingress wide at one end, narrow at the other, which effectually prevents the fish from regaining his liberty, once he has floated in with the stream. But now all this is changed, and in the present day enormous prices are asked and given.

A short while ago a river in the south of Norway let for no less than nine hundred pounds! By this it may be seen that we have not been long in teaching the simple native how to open his mouth. Yet for those who love sport in the real sense of the word, and who if they cannot afford to pay for the very best are content to take what they can get, there still remain many places, more especially in the distant and less known fjords, where excellent fun may be obtained.

Let me try and conjure up a scene familiar to every Norwegian fisherman.

Picture to yourself then a narrow valley hemmed in by towering mountains some three or four thousand feet high. On them the

white snow rests summer and winter, enwrapping their lofty peaks with an icy mantle. Bare, precipitous cliffs, down whose scarred and weather-beaten sides foam countless milky waterfalls, that fill the air with a sound of rushing waters. Little wooden houses scattered here and there, painted red, white and yellow, and looking infinitely small as they nestle at the base of the leviathan hills. Miniature fields of rye, wheat and barley, about a quarter of an acre in extent. Enormous boulders lying about in every direction, some so newly fallen that they have left a white scar on the barren bluffs over-head. Grass, emerald green in hue, wild flowers in profusion, harebells, buttercups, heartsease, marsh mallow. Birch trees with their rounded leaves trembling in the morning breeze and their silver bark peeling to the sun. The glass-like fjord that reflects every object with the fidelity of a mirror and reproduces clouds, mountains, snow, with marvellous lucidity. And lastly, but by no means least, the wondrously transparent blue-green river rushing from stream to rapid, and from rapid to deep, slumbrous pool, until it loses itself gradually in the advancing tide-way. All these things are the background and accompaniments to your sport.

And now, making still further calls upon your imagination, we ask you with your mind's eye to perceive the chequered sky overhead, darkened here and there with grey clouds that yet leave the outlines of the mountains clear, and to feel that gentle breeze, exactly from the right quarter, which makes our hopes run high. Deliberately and tenderly we pore over our fly-book, and finally select that king of flies, a "Jock Scott," or as our Norwegian gillie pronounces it, a "Yock Scott." It is one of our own making, and like the chemist and bootmaker at home, we are convinced of its superiority, and that it is an article highly to be recommended. The rod is put up, the reel adjusted, the casting line well moistened and tested.

At last, everything is in readiness and we start up the valley. If it were any but a fishing morning, we should employ our time in writing panegyrics of the route, but our zeal is too great to dwell upon scenery when there may be a "Stor Lax" (big salmon) in prospect. In course of time we arrive at a beautiful-looking pool and are told by our attendant to commence the business of the day.

This we gladly do, after first glancing upwards and downwards. To the right, the river comes foaming along over some large boulders, that check its impetuous course and cause it to break into a thousand little white-crested waves. Then it expands and widens, till the rippling water, growing quieter and quieter, subsides into a beautiful lazy swirl, which, forming one smooth dark sheet, rolls with swift, graceful, gliding motion over a ledge of jutting rocks some three feet high, and then dashes into snow-white spray as it rushes past every kind of stony obstruction.

Near the bank is a deep and sluggish back-water. Even a tyro cannot fail to see that this is a spot where salmon are bound to congregate.

We begin casting at a point where the current runs fast and gradually work our way down stream. Ten minutes elapse, full of eager expectancy. Alas! no result. We fish carefully, patiently, even artistically. We cannot help being conscious of our own merits as an angler, but great as they undoubtedly are, our powers of persuasion are evidently not sufficient.

Then—merciful Heavens! At the very end of a cast, when we have given up hope and are just wondering whether we can throw a few yards of extra line, there comes a tug. Oh! ever welcome tug.

Up goes the point of our rod in a jiffy. For all we know, it may be a forty pounder. The reel runs out with a click, but not as far as we could wish to see it, neither is there that pleasant sensation of a dead weight on the arms which betokens the capture of a big fish.

Still, whatever he may be, he is a lively fellow and keeps dashing about for fully five minutes before we gain a glimpse of him. But already he is getting feebler and his resistance grows less. We wind up steadily, and lo! right out of the water there jumps a splendid sea-trout, weighing at least seven or eight pounds. Down, down with the point of the rod, and whirr, he is off again. Nevertheless, it is a last despairing effort. Good sport as sea-trout give, they cannot fight like salmon, and the first rush is generally the best. He comes up splashing and for a moment threatens to break the line with his tail, but before long, turns on his side, with fins outstretched and red gills heaving tremulously. Now is Sivert's opportunity. He darts forward, plunges into the water like a Newfoundland dog, and with unerring eye and aim, thrusts the sharp point of the gaff through his silvery sides. The next moment he is wriggling on the grass, a thin stream of blood disfiguring his shining body.

He has taken the fly well and greedily. It has to be cut out with a strong knife from the voracious cavern of his throat. We fix the hook of our weighing-machine in his gristly under-jaw and proceed to weigh him. The notch stops at seven pounds and three-quarters—not so bad for a beginning. Our spirits rise and we are eager to be at it again.

A short pause, during which the fly is washed and cleaned and a knot undone in the casting line, and then we recommence our labours. But now, fully half-an-hour goes by. One might think there was not a single fish in the river—at all events we do not see the sign of one. The glow of exultation produced by the successful capture of our sea-trout evaporates.

First we say to ourselves, "It is high time to have another rise." Five minutes later, with an impatient sigh, "I wish to

goodness I could have another rise!" Finally, in despair, "I don't believe I *ever* shall have another rise."

This pretty well represents the different stages of feeling one goes through. By this time the pool is almost fished out; there are but some half-dozen casts left, and you determine that they, at any rate, shall be faultless. You concentrate every energy, and have the gratification of seeing the fly land with exquisite lightness on the very spot you intended, and of feeling it working thoroughly well.

But all your fine casting is of no use whatever. It only aggravates the situation, and something must have come to the fish, for they are deadly sulky. The atmospheric conditions have surely changed since you commenced angling. But then, what man knows the exact atmospheric conditions approved of by the piscatorial tribe? You have caught them in rain, caught them in wind, caught them in sunshine, and on the most likely-looking days come home without a rise. If ever philosophy were required, it is needed now. But philosophy has an ugly knack of breaking down when called upon in earnest. It is a thing easier preached than practised. Thus you muse disconsolately.

Ha! what's that? A troutlet gently sucking in the fly under water? An electric thrill runs through your frame. No, by Jove! It is borne deeper and deeper with a slow but steady persistence. A breathless moment succeeds; cautiously you tauten your line. At the first symptom of resistance, off goes the fish. There is not the least doubt about it this time—the Fates have favoured you and you are into a salmon. Your pulses throb and the beatings of your heart grow louder and louder.

Eighty yards and more spin off your reel with lightning-like rapidity before he comes to a halt. He is endeavouring to leave the pool, and is making for the fall beyond. You begin winding up with desperate haste, and put all the pressure on him that you dare, for if he gains his point he will break you to a certainty, and to lose him now would be a disappointment almost more cruel than you could bear. How heavy he feels! What a strain he places upon your arms and tackle. Thank goodness the latter is the very best that can be bought for money—good treble-twisted gut.

You succeed in reeling in about half your line. He yields it sullenly and ungraciously; then, irritated by the tension, he is off again with a mad rush. But the suspense is no longer the same. He has changed his tactics, and now tries to head up-stream. You follow as fast as you can, grasping your rod with nervous strength, now bruising your shins against some sharp boulder, anon receiving a smart slap in the face from the overhanging boughs that check your passage, again losing your foothold and splashing knee-deep into the ice-cold water. No matter; you are far too excited to heed mere physical sensations. Every thought is concentrated on the fish, who is maintaining so gallant

a struggle, for you have not mastered him yet. He still forces you to play a waiting game, and every few minutes increase the chance of losing him through some unpropitious circumstance. Until he is on the bank, gasping out his life, you cannot hold him safe.

He now proceeds to give a series of horrible short, jerky digs, each one of which fills you with alarm, for fear he should regain his freedom. These are agonizing moments, for you can do nothing to prevent them. After this he sulks until your arms and back ache and the perspiration runs down your brow. What pluck he has; what spirit and what strength! Will he never give in? If this continues, you will be tired the first of the two. Another long ten minutes go by before slowly, very slowly, he turns on his side, and his broad glistening form lies for a moment revealed to vision in all its scaly beauty.

"Sivert, Sivert," we call out in accents of delight, "he's a twenty pounder, if he's an ounce."

"Yes," comes the more sober reply. "He more dan dat; he two, tree-and-twenty poun'. God fish—very god fish."

But we have not got him yet.

Sivert makes a lunge with the gaff and misses him. He is in a bit too much of a hurry. The provocation to swear is something enormous. Out goes the line, and the game begins all over again. Fortunately, the prize is getting spent. Craftily and carefully we moor him in to the bank, calling anxiously to our attendant, "Vaer ikke i en hast!" Literally translated, "Do not be in a haste!"

This time Sivert makes no mistake. In another second, he has the cold steel through and through the salmon's lithe body, and, with an upward heave, hauls him out of the water.

What a noble fellow he is to be sure! Silvery as one of his own native "fos" (water-falls), and clean run up from the sea. As we fling ourselves on the grass by his side, we feel as if we could gaze at him for ever. Four-and-twenty pounds he weighs, all but a couple of ounces. No wonder our sinews were strained during the contest. And now, the sun shoots out suddenly and fiercely from the misty clouds, causing them to roll asunder, whilst a canopy of radiant azure takes their place. The light on the water grows intense. It renders every pebble visible in the river-bed. Fatigued by our recent exertions, we seek a sheltered nook under a quivering birch-tree, and there—with the sound of many waters murmuring a soothing lullaby in our ears, and mixing with the drone of insects, the humming of bees and the distant tinkling of sheep bells—we bring forth our modest luncheon, which we eat with good appetite and contented spirit, and say good-bye to you for the present.

AT A MONTH'S END.
LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF A MAN OF THE TIME.
A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By BERTHA THOMAS,
AUTHOR OF "THE VIOLIN PLAYER," "PROUD MAISIE," ETC., ETC.

PART I.
CHAPTER I.

A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE.

DARTCOMBE, Devon, June 19, 1880.
"For Sale—part of the library of the late Dr. Lister, comprising many scarce works, valuable editions, &c. Apply by letter to Captain Lister, Conington Court."

Two days ago the above notice caught my eye in the corner of the local paper. Though I have put off "Lanerton Lee" the author whilst rustivating in this remote nook, the book-fancier's mania still has hold of Hubert Lane the private individual. Every book-fancier has heard of Dr. Lister's library, and heard that of it which induced me to write to Captain Lister at once. I received a courteous reply, inviting me to come over this morning and inspect the books at leisure. "Be so good," thus ran the P.S., "as not to speak openly here of the sale."

From Dartcombe to Conington was a measureless drive, through the beautiful monotony of South Devon. Miles upon miles of steep narrow lanes, with high untrimmed hedges, full of dogwood and spindle berries, ivy-mantled elms and sycamores behind, and then field upon field to infinity, but never a human habitation. Quite suddenly Conington village cropped out—a dozen cottages and a toy church, scattered in a hollow, looking as though they had been dropped there by accident and forgotten. Conington Court, a strikingly picturesque stone-gabled building, faced me, standing at a stone's throw from the road, across a strip of lawn planted with shrubs and fenced off by a light iron railing. The driver stopped before a wicket gate. I walked up, admiring the singular, irregular frontage, the broken line of buttressed walls, fantastic variety in the shape of the windows, the ivy-grown turrets, with embattled parapet, and

machicolations over a large bricked-up archway, pierced by a small door, in old Gothic fashion.

I rang, and the door swung open. Stepping inside, I stopped short, taken aback—at a jarring surprise.

For I stood in a ruin. The fine stone front is a mere screen for the remains of what was once a castellated mansion. But the screen is so well preserved as in no degree to prepare you for the dilapidation that lies behind it. Skeleton walls, fallen, half-buried arches, roofless chambers, crumbling turrets overlaid with a century of ivy-growth. Such is Conington Court.

An old crone, who is lodged in some habitable corner of the place, which she shows to sight-seers, hobbled forward, key in hand, curtsying.

"Captain Lister," said I, mystified, "where does he live?"

She pointed to a plain stuccoed dwelling-house I had overlooked, visible through the trees behind the ruin, and explained.

Conington Court, an old family possession of the Listers, has for half a century been as I saw it to-day, abandoned to owls and bats and stray tourists. The villa adjacent, formerly the bailiff's house, has been let to Captain Lister for the last fifteen years by the head of the family, his cousin. She piloted me through the ruins to a gate in an old wall communicating with the villa garden. I had turned for another look at the picturesque scene. High aloft, through the loop-hole of a turret, fluttered something white. The housekeeper followed my glance.

"That will be one of the young ladies," she said.

"Young ladies here?" I asked, with mixed feelings. I had bargained only for old books.

"Five Miss Listers and Miss Ella," was her disconcerting reply.

The plain-looking villa proved the picture of lavish comfort and elegance within. Captain and Mrs. Lister received me with frank hospitality, and in ten minutes we were on easy terms. He is one of those affable, gentlemanly beings whom you get to know wonderfully well in half-an-hour, and wonderfully little better though you know them for years. The way was agreeably smoothed for my errand.

He told me how long years ago his great-uncle's library had come into his—professedly unworthy—hands. He knows little about books—cares less, and "circumstances," as he puts it, now make of the sale a pressing necessity. His sweet, sympathetic-looking wife is clearly *not* the presence in which secrecy is enjoined.

I found the famous library in a deplorable state of disorder and neglect. A glance showed me that examination here would take time. The captain courteously left me by-and-by to pursue my researches alone. It was as well. I was brimming over with indignation at what I saw. Trash and treasures jumbled indis-

criminatingly together. Great Heaven, what sacrilege! Old Ollendorff grammars, nursery rhyme books, cheap issues of modern novels (including two or three of my own), side by side with original editions of "Paradise Lost," of "The Faerie Queene," of Gower and Chaucer, rare manuscripts and Elzevirs. Here and there the covers, detached, had got mixed, and I found "Piers Plowman's Vision" encasing an old "Quarterly Review," and a Carlton-printed "Confessio Amantis" within the binding of my last-published romance! In this maze I had got no further than the conviction that my host has here a more valuable possession than he is aware of, when I was summoned to lunch.

Captain and Mrs. Lister are such a young-looking couple that the sight of their eight children, two of them grown up, impressed me with surprise. Not otherwise profoundly. The Miss Listers are like blurred and unflattering replicas of their mother—a pretty person. They are irreverently nicknamed by their young brothers, "Elizabeth, Elspeth, Bet, Betsy, and Bess!"

"Is there a ninth olive branch?" I wondered, as we seemed to be waiting for somebody.

"Where's Ella?" inquired the captain. A chorus responded:

"Up in the turret. She's been there all the morning."

"Call her, Jack," said his father to the eldest boy.

"She don't like to be disturbed when she's reading up there," Jack objected stoutly, and effectually, for a pause ensued.

"You go, mamma," suggested a Miss Lister; "she won't mind you."

The French windows were open. Mrs. Lister stepped out on the lawn and called "Ella!" The white thing up aloft fluttered, a tall young lady rose abruptly, walked along the top of the wall with surprising steadiness of nerve, and came to join the party. "Miss Lister, my niece," said the captain, introducing us. She bowed with a silent impatience of manner, as if I somehow were to blame for her unpunctuality.

"Miss Lister, my niece," must be a handsome girl when she is in a good temper. That was not to-day. Still, *not* to select her for notice among her cousins would be impossible. Like an antelope in a herd of kine, a tiger-lily in a buttercup field, she stands out from the rest. She has the stock-in-trade of a professional beauty, and a patent contempt for it. Richly shaded tints of golden brown blend in her abundant hair; her bright dark blue eyes, splendid eyebrows, milk-and-red complexion, full, curled, clearly moulded lips, would strike notice even in a London ball-room. Even, indeed! Such a wealth of natural, healthful colouring bears no transplantation from the country. And yet, plain and ill-dressed though "Elizabeth, Elspeth," and sisters are, there is more of instinctive feminine grace and gentle charm about the plainest of them than in their handsome cousin. At least their countenances are agreeable. Hers plainly bespeaks a

pride, perhaps becoming in some Muscovite mistress of a thousand souls, but misplaced in Miss Ella Lister, the impecunious ward of a ruined ex-captain in the army—too proud to be vain of her beauty, or to care to appear to advantage.

Mistress of Conington Court and the souls that are therein she undoubtedly is, and by common consent. This I learnt during lunch. They cannot so much as order the carriage or alter the dinner hour without referring to her. She is an interesting study of the natural tyranny exercised by a strong will and superior practical ability. Her remarks show her to be sensible and acute, but impatient of the slower intelligence and vacillation of those she lives with. They seem delighted for her to save them the trouble and responsibility of making up their minds.

After lunch I was reinstalled in the library. The window was imperceptibly ajar, and presently, from the lawn beneath, the low and imperious voice of "Miss Lister, my niece," caught my ear.

"Jack!"

"Well, Ella?"

"Who is he?"

"Some fellow who wants to have a look at the library."

"Uncle allows it?"

"Rather! He's been rummaging there hours already."

"Uncle is much too careless about letting in strangers. Anybody has only to ask, like this Mr. Lane—he knows nothing about him—who he is."

"How should he?" asked Jack obtusely.

"He leaves them alone—keeps no watch. I believe some of the books are very valuable; a dishonest dealer or collector—why, a common swindler—might get in, passing himself off for a gentleman."

"Oh, gemini, what a lark! Walk off with his pockets stuffed!" A good joke, the idea, in Jack's opinion. Not so for Miss Ella.

"I shall tell uncle what I think—that is, if he doesn't wish to have his books tampered with—perhaps stolen."

"Insolent little puss!" thought I, half incensed, half amused, as the voices were lost in the distance. I was soon re-absorbed in my researches; every ten minutes I came upon some fresh "find," *perdu* in a litter of tattered rubbish. I was hard at work when at five the captain came in to report progress. My day's work, I confessed, had shown me, in the first place, that a proper investigation, with the sifting it involved, would occupy a week at least. He caught at my hints concerning the value of the collection with an eagerness that surprised me. Pressed for my estimate, I named two thousand pounds as a rough guess, rather under than over the market worth of his possession.

"Two thousand!" he repeated, with sudden, undisguised elation. "Are you serious, Mr. Lane?"

I named two London firms, either of which, I could vouch, would

readily bid that amount. The news brought an absolute gaiety into his countenance. He saw what I was thinking, and rejoined:

"Ah, you don't understand, Mr. Lane, how that sum could be of vital consequence to a person in my position. You take me for a rich man. Well, really, now and then, when I look round me, I can hardly persuade myself I am not."

"Then my mistake, if such it were," I answered, "was natural, inevitable, in a stranger."

"Perfectly!" He drew a long breath. "Mr. Lane, I am deeply indebted to you. But for your timely hint I should have let the collection go for a song to a rascally country dealer, who presumed on my ignorance to try and cheat me out of fifteen hundred pounds. How can I repay you?"

"Easily!"—the opportunity was irresistible. He looked up, and I told him:

"By allowing me to complete my inspection and purchase some £200 or £300 worth for myself, at a fair valuation, before the whole goes into the market. I shall esteem it a favour."

He caught at the idea, and invited me most hospitably to be their guest for the next week; he pressed me to accept, saying frankly:

"It will be a favour to us; a visitor to enliven our solitude is a veritable godsend out here in the desert. Why, after all, one should dread the prospect of leaving such a hermitage I really don't know. Our children must gain by the exchange."

"You are leaving Conington?" I inquired. He hesitated. The confidence had slipped out unawares. But Lister is the very man to confide his dead secrets to any stranger who may happen to take his fancy.

"I am a ruined man," he said meditatively, "and have been for three years."

I should have felt concern had he shown any. Nothing seems to impress him very deeply, which is, perhaps, why he looks so little the worse for wear. Over a cigar he let me into further particulars, and an hour later I left with a pretty perfect knowledge of the private affairs of the gentleman who is to be my host for the coming week. His parting remark was a gentle reminder:

"You are coming to make notes in the library, remember. My wife knows all, but the children, so far, nothing whatever."

Captain Lister's position is just that of old Conington Court. He has continued to present the same flourishing exterior to the world, but the shell is hollow. For years he has kept up the same old high standard of hospitality, elegance, luxury, charity, with less and less means to sustain it—living more and more above his income, borrowing at ruinous rates of interest, kept afloat by doles from relations, till a last luckless speculation brought things to direful extremity. A cousin, appealed to for pecuniary aid, had

offered to extricate the captain, but, knowing his man, on condition that the bankrupt and his family should emigrate. A good appointment in New Zealand was promised to Captain Lister, who is anxious to go—easier there to start his household life again on a footing of economy than here, where his reputation and habits, put together with his disposition, made the thing next to impossible.

But one debt, unowned to, fatally clogged his steps. His orphan niece Ella's little fortune of some £2,000, left in his trust, had, through no fault of his own, as he assured me, but the rascality of a financing agent, got involved in his losing speculations. She was now just of age, and he dreaded precipitating inquiry and exposure. The discovery that the proceeds of the library would enable him to pay what was due to his ward without asking for delay was a real weight off his mind.

His folly has been unpardonable, but he seems so amiably unconscious of deserving blame that you forget it yourself in talking to him. His unreserve to myself, a stranger, whilst keeping his own family in the dark, is characteristic. I have promised to put him in communication with a firm of booksellers who will treat him liberally, and in return he is liberal of his courtesies. The week I am to spend with him will not be too long for the task I have set myself of reducing the treasure heap to the semblance of order, and making a rough list of the plums in the collection.

Conington Court, June 20.—On arriving here this morning, with bag and baggage, I saw signs that a family breeze had intervened. Miss Ella, no doubt, has protested against my intrusion, and her uncle, contrary to custom, has neither yielded nor given his reasons. She is too pretty for the rudeness of her manner to repel you merely, yet no prettiness can condone it. Her sentiments are undisguised. She ignores me, in look and speech. I see: I am an impudent interloper—here against her will and injunctions. The five Miss Listers are kindness itself—bring me tea, press me to come and play lawn tennis for a change, pilot me over the grounds and the ruins. Like their parents, they fraternize easily with chance acquaintance. Miss Ella sat up in the turret and read. I was but moderately flattered to discover that her companion was "*Charmian*," my first romance. For though unquestionably the most popular, it is the one of my novels least esteemed by myself; and admiration, from certain quarters, rather irritates than gratifies you. But hers suggested a playful experiment in revenge. The second volume I had seen on a shelf in the library. I removed it thence to the unlikeliest drawer.

Late in the afternoon, enters Jack, commissioned to fetch it. He returns empty-handed and gets rated for stupidity. At length the young lady comes in person, with evident reluctance.

Seated at the writing-table, I neither looked round nor offered my help as she searched one dusty shelf after another. When I

thought she had hunted long enough to expiate her previous incivility, I relented, turned, and was going to speak, but she anticipated me, saying with a frank, childlike courtesy of tone that routed previous conceptions:

"Have you by chance seen the second volume of this?" upholding Part I.

"Somewhere, I think," said I, pretending to look, and pulling open three wrong drawers first, then the right one. "It is difficult," I added severely, as I handed her the book, "to find anything in this chaos—the priceless treasures collected with infinite pains by Dr. Lister tossed and tumbled together with modern rubbish!"

"You like the old ones best?" she said, with lofty disdain; much as if I had expressed an eccentric preference for very old hats or gloves.

"I am afraid so," I said with mock humility. "I like them extremely."

"So did Dr. Lister, but he never touched one, except to dust it."

"Cannot you understand the reverence it is possible for these white vellum-bound volumes to inspire? the horror all book-lovers must experience on seeing them profanely thumbed or jostled?"

"I suppose even old books were made to be read, not kept under a glass case, like stuffed birds."

"It is certain few modern works will live long enough to merit such respectful treatment," said I, with as meaning a glance at "Charmian" as I could throw—to signify "that trash for instance."

"This?" she caught me up quickly. "What have you to say against it?"

"Nothing," I replied with polite irony, "if it has the honour to please you."

"You have an opinion, I suppose," impatiently. "Do you find it dull?"

"I find it unreal," I said. "The chief character—the chief incident——"

"Uncommon," she interrupted me; "but that is another thing. Would you call the oleander hawk-moth Jack caught yesterday in the garden yesterday unreal because it has never been taken in England more than once or twice?"

"Practically so, since to all but a very few such a capture is an unfamiliar or unknown experience. Better keep to your cabbage butterflies and gamma moths—to homely reality——"

"To what is commonplace, third-rate, insignificant," she put in.

"And above all," I concluded, "beware of 'high-falutin'; dreams leading you to despise what lies within your reach."

"And why not, if it is despicable?"

"Its worth depends upon how you turn it to account."

"No, on the height of your standard. Should people be contented with what is mean and trite?"

"They should accept from the outset the very narrow limits within which—with the rarest exceptions—their lots lie. Books"—with another look at "*Charmian*"—"that put people out of conceit with their actual life and possibilities have a great deal to answer for."

"It has nothing to answer for," she said proudly, accepting the application to herself. "If it is a crime to desire the best, and to care for that only, even though——" She stopped short suddenly, aware that I was watching her with some amusement, and that she had allowed herself to be drawn out, carried away by the heat of the argument. Brusquely she left the room.

At dinner I made a third, with Captain and Mrs. Lister. The young people had tea, and only the eldest girl appeared in the drawing-room after dinner. The rest were out of doors: Mrs. Lister made their excuses—it was such a fine night, and then a nightingale—a phenomenon in Devonshire—was reported to have been heard singing yesterday in the ruins, where the eight truants were now disporting themselves.

"The old place looks wonderfully well by moonlight," remarked the captain. "I am a sad Philistine myself where the picturesque is concerned, and am subject to rheumatism besides. But if you are not afraid of damp——"

"And care for the nightingales," suggested his daughter.

I am not musical, but accepted the nightingales.

The summer night was magnificent indeed. Three brilliant planets shone out in a rare conjunction, to which I directed my companion's attention. She guided me across the garden to the gate communicating with the ruins. A fair, pale, slender girl, who—like Conington Court—looked wonderfully well by moonlight; and with just that insinuating gentleness of demeanour that launches you on the track of mild flirtation.

"Wait," she whispered, as we stood inside the enclosure, under the sycamore's shade, with the grey tottering ivy-wreathed walls facing us in the gloom.

Her name, though I must have heard it, I could not, cannot now, recall. She stood with her hand resting lightly within my arm. Was it the romantic background that compelled me to act up to it? There was a certain sentimentality in the situation—the moonlight creeping round the ruins, casting mysterious shadows, the fallen house, the falling family. Every art-student of human nature is apt to encourage his personal susceptibility to outward influences, though of the slightest.

"Hush," said Mary—I will call her so. I had not spoken. A faint chirp came from the thicket. "Hark," she whispered, and we stood expectant of the ecstatic strain.

Instead, the loud hooting of an owl in the turret overhead startled us out of our reverie. The wildest, most mournful of all sounds of Nature. From the distant wood came the answering echo of its mate. The cry from the tower was repeated twice; then the bird from the wood flew over, hovered near, flapped its wings, and settled in the ivy overhead.

A human laugh greeted it there. A tall white figure rose up on the turret—the scared bird fluttered away.

“It’s Ella!” said my companion. “Oh, Ella, child, don’t!”

The false owl had no wings, but winged feet, methought. Standing erect on the ledge of a high unparapeted wall, she laughed again at her cousin’s cry of terror, ran along to where a flight of shaky steps led down below, and joined her boy cousins in another part of the ruin.

“How dangerous,” I remarked.

“She likes to frighten us,” sighed Mary, “but she never comes to harm.”

The nightingale remained obstinately mute. We soon discovered that the grass was dripping, and went indoors to hot coffee. Presently Ella reappeared, looking wild and distant, but admirably handsome—her eyes glistening like jewels, her cheeks aglow. As a piece of furniture nothing can be finer. As Mary smilingly brought me a cup of coffee I chanced to look at her cousin. I caught a contemptuous glance—Upon my soul, such a one as a young Queen Eleanor might throw upon Rosamund and the King, first suspected of weakness in that quarter. A passing flash of light, betraying—well, after all, what is more natural? My young lady is sovereign at home, and claims to monopolize the consideration of women and the attentions of men.

A stranger, looking in on us this evening, would have seen a family circle as untroubled, as firmly established, on the face of it, as any in the land. Captain Lister, pleasant and *débonnaire*, as light-hearted as though he had five thousand a year coming in from the Funds—his wife, placidity in person; his children, untroubled by the least suspicion, as thoughtless for the moment as their household pets, the kittens and canaries.

Conington Court, June 25.—Everything here is strange and contradictory; I have constantly to remind myself that things are the reverse of what they seem. Here is Captain Lister, nominally a well-to-do country squire, a pauper in point of fact, accounted a gentleman of honour, yet preserved by the narrowest chance from a shameful *exposé*; an old, happy, and seemingly stable home on the brink of a break-up. And a fireside queen whose kingdom may go to pieces any moment. A few days have placed me on familiar terms with everybody. As with a visitor to settlers on a desert island, formalities may be skipped. I take long walks with the young people, who introduce me to the country round. The place is extraordinarily lonely. Of the few neighbours some are

persons of eccentric habits and reputation, whom nobody visits, the remainder old-fashioned couples or maiden ladies—no enlivening company for the girls and boys at Conington Court. But they make company for each other. Their development has been as free and easy as that of the ivy on the ruins. Seclusion and license, the *régime* of all others to give the forces of a wilful nature full play.

Ella has seen fit to unbend to me after all. The contrast of her lively, agreeable ways, when she desires to please, with her normal brusquerie and proud reserve is certainly piquant, an unstudied effect. She appears satisfied by this time that I am no picker or stealer, with nefarious designs on her uncle's library. The conversation, when we walk out, a party of five and six, is mostly between her and myself, and on general topics; her cousins prefer listening. She has evidently thought a great deal; her ideas are fresh and naïve, but she is absolutely impatient of contradiction, and even in the merest trifles repels as intolerable any sense of failure or defeat. She has the soul of a savage in the sheath of an English girl. The strangest compound of passion, intractability of impulse, with pride and an uncompromising temper of mind; interesting, but scarcely attractive, except as a study.

I am fated to hear a good deal of my other self. I have seen no reason for announcing what no one here suspects, the identity of Hubert Lane with "Lanerton Lee," whose works they hold in a most exaggerated esteem. That one's fame should have penetrated to Conington is gratifying to vanity, of course; but I have not come to Devonshire to be lionized, but to snatch a holiday from the doubtful pleasures of notoriety. Every day I might fear to read in the *Western Morning News*, alongside with a puff of "Hop Bitters," a sale of shorthorns, and last night's charity concert at Exeter, "Mr. Hubert Lane (Lanerton Lee) is at Dartcombe, collecting material for a new novel," if, indeed, plot and personages be not given. The signal for an amateur to call at the hotel with a manuscript I am expected to read, approve and get accepted for a magazine, or for an old lady to pounce on me for a subscription. My own name is luckily too common to tell tales. As for the Listers, they are not even aware that "Lanerton Lee" is a pseudonym. And really they have placed me on such a pinnacle in their imagination that I would rather not break the illusion by forcing the stubborn fact on their notice that "Lanerton Lee" eats, drinks, sleeps, and talks about the weather like any other poor mortal of their acquaintance.

Captain Lister is doing wrong in keeping the fact of his insolvency from his children. He believes, and has over-persuaded his wife, that it is kindest to spare them the blow as long as possible. The real truth is that he is afraid of his niece. Ashamed of himself, he dreads what she will say or think when she knows all. Lister is a wretched moral coward; still, when the cloud

bursts, I pity him under the scathing comments, spoken or implied, of one member of his household. Her temperament and surroundings together have made of her a strange product. Her imagination has run riot, unchecked by the friction of experience; her strong will had its way till she feels its thwarting intolerable. Her over-exalted idea of what life has to give fore-dooms her to direful disappointment.

Dartcombe, June 30.—The murder is out, Lanerton Lee is unmasked; by mere accident the secret was told an hour or so before I took leave.

This afternoon we met for tea out-of-doors, pic-nic fashion, among the ruins of old Conington Court. I joined the party late to-day, the last of my visit. On the very eve of concluding my researches I had come upon a pile of curious volumes and MSS. of value buried behind a mass of old newspapers in a cupboard, proving that my work was still incomplete. As I approached the tea-table I heard young voices, or rather Ella's young voice, holding forth to the rest. It ceased, and one of her cousins asked her:

"When you rebuild Conington Court, shall you take away the ivy and leave none of those arches standing?"

"What do you mean? I shall pull down nothing I can help. Every bit shall be repaired that can be, and the parts wanting must be added, just as they were to begin with."

"And what shall you do with the villa?" asked Jack.

"I haven't decided," she said gravely. "It is ugly, but it would be hateful to destroy the place where one has always lived. Perhaps uncle will like to live on there. If not, you shall settle there with your wife."

Here I showed myself through an archway. Ella's colour rose, she was vexed, aware somehow she must have been overheard.

Said Miss Lister, who when a stranger's presence keeps her cousin in bounds rather enjoys teasing, "You find Ella at her old amusement of building castles in the air."

"Is it your favourite one?" I asked of the castle-builder.

"Of course," she said. "What else should I care for so much?"

"Well, I should pull down the villa," persisted Jack. "It's like the Royal Yacht Hotel at Dartcombe, and will look awful if Conington Court is restored."

"I shall not pull it down," said Ella definitely, "nor take away a stick or a stone, nor cut down a tree. I want to know the place again as I remember it always."

"Poor girl!" I was thinking. Unlike her cousins, who inherit their parents' volatility, she has taken deep root in her surroundings—her fibres have grown into them—her affections and associations belong here alone. The shock for her will be severe. I thoroughly understood at that moment how her uncle should recoil from the ordeal before him. Afraid of and used to submit to her,

he feels their new relation will be a false one, and eminently disagreeable on several counts.

Just then the man himself came hastening from the villa towards us with an animated, elated air and step, and holding an open letter in his hand. What was the pleasant news? What could the post have brought him except duns? He marched straight up to me and shook hands with me demonstratively, saying:

"Mr. Lane, my wife and I have had a great surprise. We had no idea, no suspicion—how could we? It was hardly fair of you to keep us in the dark; still, I suppose it was our fault not to guess."

At a glance I had recognized the writing of the letter he had been reading as that of an acquaintance, a common acquaintance it turned out, and there was an end of my incognito.

"Children," began the captain to his flock, seriously—ludicrously so to the subject of his harangue; "what would you think if I were to introduce you to a friend—I may say a literary idol in this household—whom we supposed ourselves to know only through his works, as all the world knows him, Lanerton Lee, but whom it has been our privilege to know as Mr. Hubert Lane?"

The silent awe of the young people, then the low, long-drawn "Oh!" of the younger girls, such as rises from a crowd when a rocket bursts and descends in a glittering shower, was something to remember. The Listers, clearly, still retain that superstitious reverence for print and literary fame that now lingers only in remote districts. The boys remained mum; the elder girls shy and diffident. I glanced at Ella with a slight curiosity to see how she took it. She was dumb and still and her countenance told no tales. Captain Lister re-engaged me in conversation, for learning of my just-made discovery in the library he pressed me to stay on to investigate it. That was impossible. For many weeks to come, as I told him, my time was not my own, but when he suggested I should return for a few days in September I closed with the invitation. He said jokingly he should keep the library locked in the interval and I might keep the key if I liked. At this point he was summoned away; the tea party meantime had dispersed. Only Ella had not stirred; her expression as I turned towards her was so strangely disturbed and so singular that I asked her what was the matter.

"Why did you not tell us who you were?" she asked rather huskily.

"I see no compulsion to proclaim the fact of one's authorship, and every reason to refrain from the least appearance of blowing one's own trumpet. And in first forming acquaintance it is far better to be unsurrounded by a false halo of fame."

"False?" she repeated indignantly.

"No such fame, for good or ill, is absolutely true. A man's

writings, whatever their accounted worth, are no fair criterion of his own, and he may prefer that this should be judged on its own merits. For instance, one ought not to need brilliant literary credentials to show people competent to judge that one is neither a common swindler nor a dishonest dealer, nor even an unprincipled book collector."

She reddened deeply and averted her face.

"Let me assure you," I said with mock gravity, "that I have sacredly respected every leaf in your library. I don't speak of Dr. Lister's Caxtons and Elzevirs, which I engage have not been so reverently handled since his decease, but the Ollendorff grammars and almanacs and French exercise books. In winnowing the wheat from the chaff I have not so much as destroyed last year's 'Bradshaw.' Your uncle will have no cause to repent having generously taken me upon trust."

I stopped, repentant myself, for she was sobbing violently, as from mixed excitement and mortification. Before I could add a word she rose hurriedly and went away, still shaken from head to foot with passionate, suppressed vexation.

It was like a child's shame. I had had no sort of wish to distress her by my teasing speech, still less to make her hate me, as she does now to a certainty. When after dinner I took my departure, she did not come with the others to wish me good-bye.

Poor child! A sad time for her is coming. It is cruel in her guardian to disguise it, and before leaving I presumed so far as to drop a plain hint to Captain Lister to that effect. He took it in good part. He is going to tell everybody everything without delay. When I return—some six or eight weeks hence—I shall find the whole household duly apprized of the facts carefully kept back hitherto. Considering that there is every prospect of their sailing for the Antipodes at Christmas, his resolution has come none too soon.

(To be continued.)

ON THE RIVER.

AN IDYL.

HE :

"SOFTLY down the stream, love,
Gently as we float,
Watch the water gleam, love ;"

SHE :

"Don't upset the boat."

HE :

"See the leafy grove, love,
Where fond lovers walk,
Sweet 'twould be to rove, love."

SHE :

"Wish you'd pull, not talk."

HE :

"Mark that youth and maid, love,
In their joy, how blessed,
Babbling in the shade, love,"

SHE :

"Badly she is dressed."

HE :

"Far above the world, love,
Let our spirits soar
Where the clouds are furled, love."

SHE :

"Now, you've lost your oar !"

HE :

“Let our spirits soar, love,
In mid-ether there ;
What can we wish more, love ? ”

SHE :

“If you'd cut your hair ! ”

HE :

“Grief we will forget, love ;
Home and kin as well ;
Now our hearts have met, love.”

SHE :

“Heavens ! What a smell ! ”

HE :

“Down love's winding way, love,
Hand-in-hand we'll jog,
Weather always May, love : ”

SHE :

“Only a dead dog.”

HE :

“And if overhead, love,
Black storm-clouds should lower,
Western skies are red, love ; ”

SHE :

“We've been just the hour.”

HE :

“With you by my side, love,
I am ever willing
To meet Fate's dark tide, love.”

SHE :

“Give the man the shilling.”

ZERO.

THE TEST OF CLEVERNESS.

By FAYR MADOC,

AUTHOR OF "THEREBY," "MARGARET JERMINÉ," ETC., ETC.

WE all like to be thought clever. There is no one who would not be hurt—if not angry—at finding that he was considered stupid, and I take it that each one of us would prefer to be dubbed a knave than a fool—that is, if he admitted truth.

But what makes us clever? What *is* this much-desired, highly-vaunted, triumphant cleverness? What is its standard? and by what criterion can we judge it?

There are many opinions respecting it. Some people think that the passing of examinations is the test of cleverness; others consider that to have written a book constitutes it; others again look upon brilliant conversation as its mark. I have heard a good linguist called clever; I have also heard a good letter-writer, a good pudding-maker, a good charade-actor, a good bird-tamer, a good stocking-darner even, described by the same delightful adjective. In short, there is no performance, from glove-mending and fire-laying to Act-of-Parliament-making and campaign-planning, the principal executors of which have not been called clever. It is a mistake, however, to call every one who makes a noise in the world clever. A great many persons whose names are well known are by no means clever, and a number of persons who live quietly in their secluded homes and are never heard of at all out of their immediate circles are clever in a marked degree.

The test of cleverness is neither power, nor originality, nor knowledge, nor intellect. It is adaptability. The clever person is essentially the person who can conform to the natures and needs of others and to the circumstances of his life. A man may be a great scholar, he may have acquired vast stores of learning, he may have formulated philosophies, and his logical powers may be incontestable, and yet if he cannot adapt himself to his surroundings, if he treads on every one's toes and always says and does the inappropriate thing, he is not clever. Whereas a man who knows very little, who has perhaps only a smattering of the 'ologies and a vague knowledge of the principal events of history, is distinctly clever, if he can be all things to all men and if he always knows what to say and do.

I have often heard it said, "So-and-so is so clever, it is such a pity he or she makes so many social mistakes." But there lies the misconception. If So-and-so makes mistakes, he or she is *not* clever. He may be talented, possibly he is a genius. But it is certain that he is not clever, for cleverness never blunders. Genius may be misunderstood and talent may be unappreciated, for neither genius nor talent necessarily combine cleverness, and it is the combination which commands success. Chatterton was a genius, but he was not clever; he had no power of adaptation, and he died young and miserably. De Quincey possessed the rarest talents, but neither could he accommodate himself to his surroundings, and he was always in debt and perpetually lived in lodgings.

But if genius and talent do not necessarily combine cleverness, they very frequently do so, and it is the clever man who has talent and the clever genius who rules the world. Perhaps the most striking instance of combination is to be found in Shakespeare. His superb genius—*i.e.*, his absolute insight into human nature and his grasp of the possibilities of things—is indisputable; his talents for expression and construction are well manifested in every page of his works, and his cleverness—his power of adapting himself to the constant requirements of man—is evinced in every one of the characters he drew. Shakespeare's genius has undoubtedly given him immortality. But as undoubtedly his cleverness has added popularity to that undying fame. Other great writers have achieved an endless celebrity. The genius of Milton and of Dante, for instance, will never be forgotten; but Dante and Milton wrote for the few, and only the cultured can appreciate their lofty verse, while Shakespeare wrote for all, for the great and the small alike, for the sage and the unlearned, for old and young, for men and women.

I once read the conjecture, that had Shakespeare lived now he would have written novels, and that had George Eliot lived in the Elizabethan period she would have written plays. It is very likely. The genius of these two great people would always have been the same, and the cleverness of each naturally dictated the form in which they should crystallize their thoughts. Had Sir Thomas Malory's talents been superadded to a cleverness such as theirs, he would have written the stories of Arthur and Guenever, of Lancelot and Elaine, of Galahad and Percivale, in dramatic form, and instead of the "Morte d'Arthur" being almost a sealed book, its delightful contents would have been household words for evermore. But this gifted author did not see that it was useless to offer a book to a people who didn't read, and hence his work has been buried for centuries. Shakespeare and George Eliot were far too clever to make such a mistake. Notwithstanding their incomparable power, neither would have won the same renown had they not perceived what was the engine of their day.

For in Shakespeare's time only a few read and many went to the play, and at the present moment there are millions of readers and only a few scores of theatre-goers.

There has been an outcry lately for new plays, and dissatisfaction has been expressed at the absence of playwrights amongst us. I think that this clamour evidences a great lack of cleverness in the clamourers. It is not the spirit which is wanting. There is abundance of dramatic fiction in the present day, and our libraries teem with books that are full of fine situations and sparkling dialogue. But the demand, as I have intimated above, comes now from the readers. Most of us look for our amusement now in the three-volume novel, not in the five-act comedy, and the few play-goers are satisfied with the old plays and prefer to see them over and over again. There is no demand for new plays. Who wants to see a new play when he is not tired of Shakespeare and Sheridan and Sheridan Knowles and Goldsmith? I think the audience is cleverer than the critics. But if the critics must suggest something, why should they not suggest that the pens which can make French subtleties fit for ears polite, might with as great facility do the same kind deed for the outspoken dramatic poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who, living in an age when Mudie and Smith were not born, and when there was a playhouse in every village, disburdened their souls in the only language which was likely to be heard of men. Vegetation cannot thrive upon an exhausted soil, and why do people expect that human wit should eternally produce the same literature? It is absurd to look for good plays from a reading nation. It is the novelist's day now, and for pity's sake let him have it! Who knows but that in a coming age, with our board schools and our College of Preceptors in its new home, and our multiplied schools and colleges and our competitive examinations, novels will be relegated to the lumber-room, and the demand will only be for science primers and text-books of literature?

But I have digressed.

Cleverness is admittedly distinct from talent and genius. But although cleverness can run very well without talent or genius, neither genius nor talent can run at all without cleverness. Cleverness brings these higher gifts to the front, and hence a confusion of terms has often arisen. Certainly the most talented people and the greatest geniuses are invariably clever also, but there are a great many talented people in the world who have never become distinguished for lack of cleverness. They have brilliant ideas, grand ideas, highly original ideas, or they can even execute well—they can paint a fine picture or compose a touching melody, or perhaps write a stately epic—but there their powers end. They cannot adapt themselves; and it is cleverness which seizes its opportunity, is seen and heard at the right moment, strikes the chord to which a response is certain, sees the corner it

can fill, is always ready and always compliant. For cleverness seeks to please and aims at popularity. Perhaps by itself it is not perfectly high-minded: it is apt to pander to the tastes of the hydra-headed monster; it flatters him, tries to catch his eye, acts up to him, answers his expectations. It never makes him feel foolish and ignorant and insignificant as talent often does. Talent by itself is generally antagonistic. It rather likes to make other people feel small; it seeks to push its own doctrines and make its own name great; it rings its dinner-bell whether people are hungry or not, and is angry if they don't attend; it despises the public and yet tries to lead it. The public resents all this; it snubs talent and calls it names and won't eat its dainties, and utterly refuses to be led by it. It is only when talent is accompanied by cleverness, which shows it when to be stern and when indulgent, and teaches it how far to be true to itself and how far to answer the popular cry, that it flourishes and makes itself known and esteemed. By itself it is sure to fail. And if talent suffers from the want of cleverness, still more does genius. Genius is generally too lofty for common appreciation, and if it be at the same time utterly uncompromising, the chances are that its glory will die with it and that it will leave no mark but the remembrance of its own personality. By his genius Alexander conquered half the world, and if he had been clever enough to organize a great system of administration the Alexandrian empire might have existed unto this day, and the whole history of the world might have been altered. But he was not clever, he never even sought to adapt his ways, and his empire crumbled away. There is nothing left of his conquests: only a great name standing still and lonely in the plains of the bygone ages. Genius, truly, can never remain hidden or unacknowledged, but the genius that wins love and gratitude must be firmly seated upon a basis of cleverness.

The reason that people who come to the front are called clever is that talented people who are not clever never do come to the front. But there are plenty of every-day people who are never near the front, but who are clever enough for all that. The wife who manages to live happily with a miserly or a crotchety or a jealous husband; the man who is loved by men and women alike, whose little successes are never envied and whose little disappointments are always pitied; the clergyman who has no aggrieved parishioner among his flock, and who is friends both with Father Clement and the Reverend Mr. Stiggins; the domestic servant who knows our ways exactly; the tradesman who gains and keeps our custom by his obliging manners and his dispatch; the bland schoolmaster whose house is always full—these are all truly clever persons, although they are merely the Toms, Dicks and Harrys of society. Be it thoroughly understood that cleverness has nothing to do with intellect. It is a

quality, like good temper or sweetness of voice or length of limb. Intellect is a gift, and though a gift is to be highly prized, a gift without a quality to float it is valueless. It is like a violinist without a fiddle: he might as well be a chimney-sweep. Indeed, there are plenty of intellectual persons who are far from clever. We all know the man—the clergyman whose sermons are so profound and eloquent, or the barrister who wins such forlorn hopes, or the moralist who has written such a magnificent treatise—who if he be left for five minutes to superintend the children's dinner, is sure to let Willie eat too much and allow Molly to knock over the carafe, and who infallibly splashes the gravy all over the cloth, and spills the grease on the carpet, and gives Baby a cherry with the stone in it. And we all know the intellectual woman, who reads everything and talks well upon it, and who perhaps writes and possibly lectures, but who can never square her accounts when she has been to the Army and Navy Stores with a five-pound note in her pocket, and who always gets into the wrong train, and is invariably interviewing some one when her husband comes home, and who lets the little girls sprawl on the floor and sew without thimbles, and suffers the little boys to bite their nails and forget to open the door for ladies. Oh, the pity of it! The intellectual man who misses cleverness is probably a bore, and certainly a failure; but the intellectual woman who is not clever is worse: she is a bore and a failure, and a scandal into the bargain.

The notes of cleverness are three: first, invariability; second, practicalness; third, adaptability.

A clever person is always clever. That is, a clever sanitarian does not wear flannel for a winter or two and then discard it, does not attend to his diet on Monday and eat carelessly on Tuesday, does not see to his drains in June and suffer a bad odour in July; and a clever materfamilias does not manage Tom's temper and control Florie's flirtations at Christmas and allow her son and daughter to quarrel and flirt at Easter; and a clever cook does not serve the dinner well when covers are laid for twenty and send up uneatable viands when Sir John and her ladyship dine alone; and a clever tailor does not fit Lord Apollo *à merveille* and turn out poor Mr. Dump as if his clothes had been made for Captain Hump. Talent often lies dormant, and at all times requires a fit soil in which to flourish, and genius often only flashes forth once in a lifetime. But cleverness is always present (unless it should be temporarily obscured by illness), and a clever person will be clever at all ages, from first maturity to the end of his days. Certainly, I do not believe in clever children. In the nature of things, clever children are unlikely, for cleverness is a quality which implies self-dependence, and if one is to see an opportunity and seize it, one must not wait to ask mamma. Childhood can obey implicitly or it can imitate exactly. But it can hardly

take its own line. Like the teeth, cleverness does not develop at birth.

And cleverness is practical. It never offers us what we don't want, or tries to stuff us with meats we are not prepared for, but it keeps pace with the genius, and when a giant has made a great discovery it comes forward and utilizes it, to our joy and convenience. Genius invented the railway. But it was the cleverness of Bradshaw which gave us the Railway Guide for sixpence. The great manufacturers and merchants who supply us with biscuits and blacking and pills and hairwash and soap and everything else that the heart of man can possibly desire, are always some of the cleverest people of their day. Eminently practical, they enrich themselves by giving us satisfaction. They hear the first faint sigh for chocolate, or pickles, or mustard, or cod-liver oil, and lo! the article we languish for is in our hand. Certainly, there may come a day when the names of Pears and Epps, of Horrocks and Keiller, will be forgotten, whilst Descartes and Newton, Shelley and Keats will be remembered during all time. But cleverness does not aspire to fame. It simply aims at making the best of things now and laying up a little store for its next of kin. Games will illustrate this note of cleverness. Thoroughly stupid people never play games at all, and gifted people who are not clever often play them badly. The reason of this is not far to seek. Games require that the player should have quick wits, that he should see and take instant advantage of every circumstance that occurs. In a slow and thoughtful game like chess, these spontaneous qualities are less needed; hence we often see chess played by persons who are intellectual alone. But such games as whist, cribbage, backgammon, cricket, tennis, essentially require cleverness to be well played. They call for quick perception and instantaneous action; they demand a correct and rapidly-formed judgment; they need at once both memory and foresight, due tension and swift performance combined. Genius may invent a game and talent may improve it—may think of new methods of bowling, of whist-signalling, of scoring; but it is the clever man who is the expert, who is the successful player and who is always on the winning side.

Also, and chiefly, cleverness is adaptable. It can fit itself into every corner, it can accommodate itself to every exigency. Herbert Spencer has defined life as "the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations." This being granted, cleverness becomes the soul of life, for it is continually adjusting itself to circumstances, and the more in harmony a man is with his circumstances the cleverer he is. Genius may make us mad with its preaching and may force us to walk about with peas in our shoes and scourge ourselves and burn all our story-books and make life into quite a desert of severe things; and talent may make us feel uncomfortable and tell us that everything we like is

Philistine, and that all our fancies are crude. But cleverness always goes with the stream and gives us what we like best and what we want. It never deals in incongruities or antagonisms; it is never the death's-head at the feast. It is always sympathetic—comes in skates at Christmas and in tennis shoes at midsummer; has a hushed voice for all our head aches and orange flowers for all our bridals.

“In the reproof of chance,
Lies the true proof of men.”

The cleverest is he who can use chance as a walking-stick—like Coleridge's raven, who

“Picked up the acorn and buried it straight,”

and came back and dwelt there when

“The acorn was grown to a tall oak tree.”

Most of us don't see the acorn, and when we get old we grumble that we have no home in a tall oak tree. But it was our own fault; we buried something that the soil couldn't assimilate, and nothing came of it. It was sad enough in all faith. But it was also uncommonly stupid. There are thousands of chances in every man's life, and the clever men pounce upon them and turn them into substantial blessings. But the stupid men, however wise and learned they may be, don't see them, and leave them hanging behind the door, or tread them under foot or frighten them away rudely. You must be very gentle with your chance. A clever fellow has at it without a moment's hesitation, and secures it. But when he has it, he handles it as tenderly as if it were a rare butterfly. There was once a young man who was really very gifted and had all manner of scientific inventions at his fingers' ends, and all he wanted was money and influence to push them. So some one got him an introduction to a great man, and every one said poor Malapert's fortune was made. But it wasn't. For the great man, though he had the heart of an eagle and the mind of a god, chose to live in softly carpeted chambers, and liked low voices and much courtesy. And Malapert behaved so indecorously, tramping about like an elephant and shouting like a sea-dog in a storm, that the great man thought he was an impostor, and politely showed him out into the cold, and there he is still. He had his chance in his very hand, and he lost it through his want of tact. He is a wretched old man now, so poor that he eats, but never dines. Yet he might have set the Thames on fire if he had only been clever. And he might have been happy. For though genius and talent are often miserable and gloomy, cleverness is always happy, because it never blunders, never has anything to regret, never expects more than it gets.

It is a sublime thing to be a genius, and a fine thing to have gifts, but it is a blessed thing to be clever. For the clever man misses nothing, falls out with no one, enjoys life to the utmost, and probably because he is successful, is also good. And when one is good, we know——

But a truce to moralizing. I will tell you a story instead.

Once upon a time there was a poor widow, who was left with three sons. Now the eldest of the three was musical; he had so fine an ear that he could detect the quarter of half a demi-semitone, and he could play so skilfully that when you set him down at an old piano which hadn't been opened for fifty years he brought such lovely music out of it that it seemed as if the worn-out old instrument must be inspired. And the second could paint so exquisitely that it seemed as if his likenesses were twin brothers and sisters to the sitters, and many lords and ladies fell hopelessly in love with his Psyches and Endymions, mistaking them for living people. But the youngest could do nothing, and he had no artistic yearnings; he didn't faint at the sound of bag-pipes nor shudder at the sight of an inharmonious grouping of colours; and he liked swimming and riding and playing hare and hounds with other boys.

"Noddy is decidedly stupid," said the mother. "He has no talents whatever. Fortunately he is sweet-tempered and obliging, and in after years, no doubt, his brothers will see he doesn't want."

When the boys were old enough their mother sent them forth daily to earn their living, and sometimes the eldest and sometimes the second would come proudly back with his pockets full of golden guineas and relate how he had been to some fair or market, and how people had wept to hear his music, or had gone into ecstasies at the sight of his pictures. But these great days were only occasional; it is not every day of the week that one has time to listen to a sonata or sit for one's portrait. Noddy, however, never returned home with empty pockets. He seldom, it is true, brought back enormous sums. But his gatherings were regular, whereas those of his brothers were entirely fortuitous, and sometimes for weeks together these gifted youths made nothing, and it was then that Noddy's daily pence kept the pot boiling.

"How do you do it?" the elder brothers asked. "Such a duffer as you are, too!"

"Well, I am always on the spot," returned Noddy.

"What spot?" they inquired.

"*The spot*," said Noddy. "I can't tell you more than that. It's in a different place every hour of the day. You should never try to come ashore when the tide's running out, and you should always keep your eye on the weather-cock and remember which way the wind blows, and, above all, you ought to cut your coat according to your cloth."

"But how can one do that?" said the eldest brother. "I can't cut my coat and handle my bow at the same moment."

"And I can't keep my eye on the weather-cock when I'm painting," added the other.

"Well, if you like to come with me, I daresay I could give you a tip or two," Noddy would say.

So one day, when fortune had been adverse a specially long time, the eldest brother slunk out after breakfast, joined Noddy, and begged to be allowed to bear him company. And Noddy acquiesced, and, moreover, gave his brother the tip as he had promised, so that, lo and behold, the youth who had made nothing for weeks came home in the evening rich! The next day the second brother stole out after Noddy, and the same happy result awaited him. Indeed, it soon became apparent that whoever got Noddy's tip was successful.

"How is it?" the elder brother asked. "You're not clever, you know, Noddy, and yet you always seem to see into the middle of next week."

"You see, *I know when*," rejoined Noddy cheerfully.

Whereat the elder brothers tried to pull their sprouting moustaches, and said, "That's it. It's a good thing the poor chap has something. When a man isn't clever, it's convenient if he can back the winner."

And they agreed between themselves that their youngest brother had been born under a lucky star.

But a gentleman, who hated Wagner and never read anything but shilling dreadfuls, and laughed immoderately at "The Private Secretary," but who always saw as straight and far as if he had been the sun himself, took Noddy into his bank, and after a time Noddy rose to be a distinguished banker, and had a fine income, and lived in clover, and became a Cabinet Minister, and dictated Circular Notes to all the Great Powers. And his brothers were great artists, and they always had money in their pockets, and were loved and admired by the whole world. But Noddy continued to give them the tip, though no one knew that he pulled the strings.

"Noddy's a good fellow," the elder brothers would say as they grew old and grey. "He's not clever, of course; but he's had uncommon good luck, and it's a capital thing to have a brother who always hits the right nail on the head."

A THAMES BACKWATER.

By ARTHUR T. PASK,

AUTHOR OF "FROM LOCK TO LOCK," ETC.

A LEAF from the willow branch overhead has just fallen on to my nose. If I had the wealth of Mr. Mackay, the "Silver King," or of the Maharajah What's-his-name, Holkar, I would give any one a thousand pounds to save me the trouble of lifting up my hand to brush that much-to-be-accursed leaf off. *Parole d'honneur* (I hope this is a proper way to put it, and that I have spelt my French right), I have just sculled my light gig into a Thames backwater; I have taken up the stretchers, piled all the cushions into the stern, and am lying at or would be at my ease in the bottom of the boat, only that, well—*that—that* leaf. There! I have brushed it off, and am ready to make an affidavit, only I wouldn't be bored with anything of the sort, that I am five degrees hotter. *Eh bien*, I suppose I must make the best of it. One comfort is, I can enjoy my smoke without the trouble of having to take pipe or cigarette out of my mouth. I have got a nice little hookah, and stuck the bowl on the seat so that I can puff away as calmly as Peter von Sturveysant.

Being in a Thames backwater, which is, of course, being in one of the quietest, sweetest nooks in the world, perchance you think I am going to rush off into one of those dear old, ancient, crusted, well-seasoned quotations. I most certainly am not! I am *not* going to say anything about—

1. *Sub tegmine fagi* ;
2. *Dolce far niente* ;
3. "Not o'erflowing full ;"
4. Far from the madding crowd.

Why, the very effort of trying to remember anything is enough to put me in a fever. No! I shall half close my eyes and dose, with my hat o'er my nose, and think on my Rose; why, I am half asleep, and her name ain't—I mean isn't, I mean is *not* Rose, but Maude. And upon my soul it is rather difficult to keep awake, I can tell you. The painter is fastened to that bit of twisted root sticking out of the bank, and the end of the thick white cord is lapping in the water, and a water-beetle is doing Blondin on it; and he can, for what I care, for I'm not going to bore *myself* with stopping him. Hullo! there is a rustling in the

leaves—flop! splash! It's a water-rat! There he goes swimming across, leaving a bright waving glittering line in his wake. I remember years ago when I used to go for these water-rats in the trowlocks by Teddington Lock. I remember a boy, too, who once boasted that he had eaten a water-rat, and that he liked it.

We didn't much believe *him* though, for he had a way of priggish other boys' things out of their desks. However, I don't wish to be hard on his memory, poor dear lad! He didn't become a professional thief of the lower order, he became a sort of financial agent, amassed a large fortune, bought a large place in Loamshire, and lives there highly respected by everybody. I daresay if I met him he would ask me to dine with him. However, all the same I wish he hadn't stolen those leads off my night lines, when I was a little boy, to make counters like shillings, but it was a way he had. It was only the early dawning of financial genius. I often wondered whether Mrs. Watt ever spanked the youthful inventor of the steam engine when he was trying those experiments of his and "spileing" the kettle. Hang James Watt, I say! What do I want to bore myself about him for?

How pretty that bit of bank looks through the branches of the willow. Nigh by the somewhat draggle-tailed old foxglove there is a tiny patch of forget-me-not. What's that song about forget-me-not?" "By rippling brook, by purling stream." Oh! I know it's one of Ganz's. Let me see, once upon a time I used to know a girl that sang that. I used to sit on the lawn with her father while she sang indoors with the French windows open. It was at one of those Hampton Wick houses, with lawns down to the river. We used to sit and listen to the nightingale in the moonlight, or to the bargees swearing as they dropped down with the stream to the lock. I loved that girl. I own it—yes, I own it. But all the same she married a railway barrister—a sniggering, supercilious beast with mutton-chop whiskers. I saw her this year, perched on the top of a house-boat at Henley. She had a tussore and blue serge half-yachting costume on. And it didn't become her, and she had grown hideously stout, and she was positively wolfing down her lunch. I hope it disagreed with her, and that she was out of temper next morning, and let the barrister beggar have it. I hate 'em both!

But what on earth do I want to bore myself about this sort of thing for? There's such a lot of wild geranium about here that the warm acid scent of the leaves is quite refreshing, and the blue robin's-eye is still in bloom; and even the buttercup has ventured to flower again. But I can hear the splash of sculls on the river, the other side of the island. Thank goodness no one has come in here; I like to have my backwater to myself. They are gone! That's something to be thankful for, anyhow. How still and quiet it all is. I fancy that I can almost hear the long-

legged fly skimming over the water. There *is* a distant buzzing at last, which comes nearer and nearer. A great dragon-fly has stopped short in mid-air, as if having a look at me. He evidently wants no further acquaintance, for he buzzes his way into the osiers and is lost altogether. But no, I can't be let alone. Here comes another visitor—a swan, for a change; I *won't* say a stately swan. What a comfortable time these beggars must have of it, these sinecurists of the Thames Conservancy. I throw a cork at him, and with a scuttle and a hissing that is meant, doubtless, for a waterfall of the most freely-adjectived bad language, he curves his neck, and with a malignant squint out of his dark eye is soon off. I look across the backwater to the meadow's bank. There, a great horse-chestnut mirrors its branches in the still water; there are a few scraps of paper lying about—a river picnic, of course. I can't help thinking of some of my river picnics—banjo playing, bad champagne, lobster salad and giggling. I wonder if I could enjoy cheese-cakes and sherry now, as I did, as Monsieur Béranger sings, “when I was twenty-one.” Those cannibalistic feeds of Maids of Honour in old Richmond town! Sweet, sweet, pleasant, sticky memory, happy, happy dream!

But the sunlight now is mellowing and the shadows have lengthened. A water-wagtail is hopping on the bank. I always like water-wagtails, whether on the sea-shore or the river meadow. I suppose there are kingfishers to be seen somewhere or the other on the Thames even now, but I can't say that I ever met with one yet. The sunlight now streaming through the leaves of that horse-chestnut prints a rich golden lattice on the water. Splash! a dace has leapt out for a breath of evening air, turned a silvery summersault—I like that!—and fallen back again. I wonder if ever an otter made his way here; I hope not, nasty, restless, sniffing creatures. It is quieter than ever now; so quiet that I can hear the noise of the water-mill not so far away. The rhythmic splash of the water mingles with the feeble twitter of birds and the tinkle of the distant sheep-bell; I look above, for there is a stir in the leaves of the willow, and I can catch the slightest sound; a chaffinch is peeping down at me; he takes things as coolly as I do myself, and is not in the least afraid. He is without doubt a judge of human nature; there is nothing in *me* worth looking at, and he, too, retires.

Now at last I am disturbed in earnest. One of the men from the osier beds comes punting in with a load of cuttings and weeds. Picturesque gondolier of the silver Thames, he is clad in corduroys and a blue shirt, and he has a grizzled gray head, and he looks as if he chewed tobacco, and I am positively certain that he does. I knew he did!

“You haven't got such a thing as a bit of bacca hanging about you, sir?”

He has moored his rough tarred and pitched punt close to my

bows; I don't as a rule hang my birds-eye like calfskin on my "recreant limbs," so I throw him my pouch. He immediately takes some out and plugs his cheek; he throws me back my pouch, and sitting on a heap of weeds in the centre of his modest craft, begins to be sociable. The most pleasant topic of conversation with our labouring poor is ever the most horrible.

"Dreadful drownin' that at the weir yesterday, sir; ain't found the poor gent yet: why, he might turn up here at this here werry moment—I've heard tell o' such things in my time."

I meekly suggest that as I am rather a timid person, I should be somewhat obliged if the unfortunate deceased would turn up somewhere else. My friend shakes his head wisely.

"I don't suppose as how you believe in ghostesses, sir, but there's a deal o' walkin' in these here parts" (*i.e.*, ghosts walking).

I ask him if he would like a little whisky and water and hand him my flask. He helps himself moderately, drinks my health modestly, hands back the flask, and wipes his mouth on his shirt sleeve.

"Why, sir, there's the miller's wife's ghost. Awful chap as lived up at the mill, 'undeds and 'undeds a-years ago. Got jealous on her as she danced with another man at the fair. Says the miller (so *they* all says), 'You've been a-linkin' arm with the Lunnon man and ye've taken fairin's from him at Henley fair, and ye drunk out of his mug o' yale.' Then she ups and says to the miller, 'No, miller, do-ee not say such like. I've been a good and trew wife to thee.' But the miller bein' in a regler tantrum like ups with his right hand and regler Punch and Judy knocks her down into the water, and she was drowned dead then and there. And they do say as how she's seen at times o' misfortun' a-walkin' about nigh the mill a-wringin' o' the water out o' her hair and a-singin' in a creepy-crawly voice as makes the blood run cold most uncommon."

"Why," I say, "you're quite a story teller."

He shakes his head slowly.

"I ain't conceited on it, sir. But I ain't ordinary and every-day like, so the mates says"—he looks at me as if I were about to deny his statement—"and I tell ye what, sir, the day I was born we had a black cat as had a six-toed kitten. But I must be a-goin', sir."

He leaps ashore into an opening in the osiers, and I hear him rustling among the lithe branches.

The mellow light of the sun has now taken a warmer hue. The distant clouds floating over the still meadows are tinted with rose colour, and the grey branches of the osiers have changed to a shell-pink, and the placid backwater is a sheet of faintest opal. An ill-omened bat flutters down. The day is sunk in rest and I ought to scull home to my dinner at the Highmead Hotel, only

I am not hungry and prefer stopping where I am; for I'll wait till a silver moon shall rise in a blushing sky and—dear me! there's another water-rat.

And in the quiet here I cannot but think of those old days in the Thames that are “lost to me—lost to me.” Why, in this very backwater how many a swim I have had? Old schoolfellow Mac, where art thou now?—Grinding out justice and health in the far-away Orient. *Souviens-toi, mon ami*, those happy hours when we used to sit on the sunken stumps in the hot July afternoons with only our youthful heads out of the water. And honest, jolly, sunny-hearted Jack. Alas! when I think of thee I hear the strain of the funeral march in the sun-burnt stony defile of the Affghan hills, when they laid thee down to rest in a forgotten grave. And pleasant Dick—well, I wish you hadn't asked me to back that little piece of paper of yours as a mere matter of form. Let the past keep to itself!

Now, too, chewing the sweet and bitter cud, and as “the evening twilight gathers round,” why, as a matter of course, “I think of thee, my love.” Again I see that white dress flitting o'er the Thames lawn, those lips that rival the General Jacqueminots decking the standards by the garden path; again I gaze into those eyes blue as the *Delphinium formosa*, and those cheeks sweet as the *Lilium luncifolium rubum grandiflora* (I like this, because *her* name was Flora). You see I am in my fogey days. We used to play at croquet; it was in the dark ages before tennis came to light; it is very touching all the same: I wish that caterpillar had not dropped on to my chin. It is getting chilly and I must be off; thin flakes of mist are rising in the backwater and floating over the meadows. I put the stretchers back in their places, stick the cushions on the seat, put my hookah in the locker and loosen the painter from the willow root. As I stand up and look about me I see the harvest moon in the sky, although the crimson sunset still glows in the west. I slowly scull past the osiers. I suppose there is a house-boat moored on the other side of the island, for I hear the sound of a piano and a gruff brandied-and-sodad voice yelling out “Queen of my heart, to-night.” Bah! why should the peaceful quiet of *my* backwater be broken by such a hideous discord? I scull swiftly on. I make a sudden turn and am out into the open river. Adieu! Sleep on through the moonlit night, my backwater. May the water-rat revel as he list and draws lines of silver on thy placid surface; may the leaves of the pink bank-geranium flutter silently down and be taken by the Thames fairies for fishing craft! A nightingale is singing. Good-night, my backwater, good-night, good-night, good——

A FALSE START.

By HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "BAD TO BEAT," "THE OUTSIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXII.

RIPE FOR TEMPTATION.

AUTUMN, with all the glories of its dying tints, has departed ; a few last lingering leaves have fluttered lifeless to the ground ; hedge and tree stand stark and bare, grimly defying the chill embrace of winter which now threatens them. The markets are glutted with pheasants ; the Christmas turkey and the Christmas holly are already shadowed on the horizon, and the Christmas bills, more surely to be depended upon than either turkey or sausages, loom imminent in the near futurity. The Enderbys have paid their farewell calls, have wished their friends good-bye, have shaken the dust of Tunnleton from their feet, and left their characters behind them. Much debate about these latter still raged in Tunnleton, for General Shrewster and Frank Chylton have both now spoken out and narrated the singular story of John Madingley's wedding present. It is known now how the Enderbys suddenly became possessed of such command of money ; it is known now what induced Maurice's strange interest in the turf ; it is known now what was the cause of that visit to "The Spotted Dog," which had so scandalized Tunnleton ; and all but the most bigoted and obstinate of its inhabitants are fain to admit that under similar circumstances they would have acted much as Maurice did. A strong reaction has set in in favour of the Enderbys, while Mr. Richard Madingley's reputation is drowning in the backwater of public opinion. Mr. Molecombe especially is full of regret that he did not sooner recognize the curate's good qualities. The rector makes himself peculiarly offensive to Maurice's opponents, by alluding to him as "that excellent and talented young man, whom an obstinate faction literally hounded out of Tunnleton." General Shrewster cuttingly remarks that those who had condemned Maurice Enderby and believed in Richard Madingley had shown they did not know a gentleman when they saw him, and had exhibited much want of tolerance in their judgment.

General Maddox, finding the storm run high, and that he had

been somewhat mistaken in his estimate of Maurice's iniquities, thought it expedient to leave Tunnleton for a temporary change of air, but the irascible Praun stood manfully to his guns, and declared that, if Enderby had not yet been guilty of the charges brought against him, he inevitably would be before he had done; that the thirst for gambling was implanted in his veins; that they might tell this tale of a wedding present to the marines; that if Mr. Enderby had not bet as yet, which he didn't believe, they would very soon hear of his transacting business in that respect, that is if they ever did hear of him again; that Mrs. Enderby had exhibited her fiendish temper when spoken to in her own interest by two of her best friends; that those who lived would see. And then the general faded out of the club billiard-room with a rumbling chorus of expletives suggestive of service seen with that famous army of Flanders. On the subject of Dick Madingley, the general prudently refrained from expressing any opinion. He had his own misgivings concerning that gentleman, and remembered regretfully that he had constituted himself one of his principal supporters in Tunnleton.

The Enderbys meanwhile had established themselves in comfortable lodgings in the Hyde Park district, and Maurice was turning over in his mind what calling he had better embrace. Thanks to the successes of the "Wandering Nun," he had a very comfortable balance at his banker's, and this would give him time to look around. For some time the Bar commended itself to his attention, but the beginning of that profession was cast among rather stony places, and at the best some time must elapse before he could expect to make even a slender income at it. Many young barristers at the outset of their career supplemented their business with their pens. This Maurice had commenced trying to do at Tunnleton, and still continued in London, but, though it had been attended latterly with some little success, it certainly did not at present promise to swell to a regular income. And yet for the life of him, beyond the Church and the Bar he could see no other profession open to him; medicine required special training, and for the army and navy he was too old for admission. It must not be thought that Maurice was lounging about town in a happy Micawber state of mind waiting for something to turn up; he was strenuously seeking for the "something" himself; but it is not quite so easy at six-and-twenty to find an opening. However, after some weeks' reflection, he attained the first great step. He made up his mind what it was he wanted, and there is much in that. It was true his choice fell on what he believed to be utterly out of his reach; but the apparently unattainable is sometimes achieved by dogged perseverance. He would be a soldier if he could; and he decided that he could do no better than write to consult General Shrewster on that point.

General Shrewster's answer speedily arrived; he would do his

best, and was willing to seize every opportunity; but he pointed out that Maurice's age precluded his getting into the army by any of the regular channels. "Your only chance, my dear Enderby, of joining the profession is by a by-path; they don't stand much of it in these days; still, a commission is got now and again in that way. You must wait for a war of some kind, and with our magnificent and extensive empire the luxury of a small war is a thing we are rarely without for many months together. You must then go to the authorities, and volunteer to go out in any capacity. You will be handsomely snubbed no doubt; never mind that. Your case becomes my business then, and I shall hope that I may have influence sufficient to induce some one employed to take you on his staff, in of course an unacknowledged capacity; then we must trust to the chapter of accidents. If you get a chance of distinguishing yourself, or do good service in the field, your chief may recommend you for a commission, and we must endeavour all we know then to get you appointed to a regiment. You will be beginning late, but if luck favours you with plenty of fighting you may easily make up for a bad start. An old friend of mine was six years an ensign in an infantry regiment, but nevertheless was a Colonel of Dragoons at the end of eleven years. May fortune be as favourable to you when we get you started.

"With kindest regards to Mrs. Enderby,

"Believe me,

"Ever yours,

"JAMES SHREWSTER."

This letter gave much encouragement to Maurice. From that out he began to take much interest in the proceedings of our missionaries, who are the cause perhaps of more of our petty wars than anybody else. That matter of religion has been productive of bitter feeling since the world began, and the desire of the one man to arbitrarily substitute his own creed for that of his neighbours, the cause of much heartburning exasperation. Strengthened by Shrewster's counsels, Maurice gave up the thought of seeking other employment. He read the papers carefully, more especially the Indian news, but the winter glided away, and England seemed as far from an embroglio as ever. It was unfortunate, but an unnatural tranquillity seemed suddenly to have settled over the restless area of the British Empire. Of the numberless races which acknowledge the sway of England, not one at present showed signs of irritability. Maurice even wrote a letter to General Shrewster, complaining of the stagnation in the trade of wholesale murder. The veteran could not help smiling upon receiving his *protégé's* letter, "such a rapid conversion," he murmured, "was never seen. Most decidedly, he was not in his right vocation here." But he wrote a few lines to Maurice and told him not to trouble himself, for that England was very seldom long without a small war

on her hands; that in the meantime he was in the right place both for obtaining the earliest information and for making the earliest application for employment; and further promising to come himself to town directly he saw a chance of forwarding his (Maurice's) interests.

But as winter merged into early spring, in his search through the papers Maurice found himself constantly confronted with the betting on the spring handicaps, and as the weeks slipped by the betting on the Two Thousand and Derby became added to the price-list. The old infatuation once more took possession of him, although the "Wandering Nun" was engaged in none of these races, but in watching the returns of last year's sport Maurice had acquired a general knowledge of the running of most of the more prominent horses on the turf, and had noted the vicissitudes of their various careers with the keenest interest. Once more he began speculating in his own mind on their chances, and picking out what he conceived ought to be the winners of these races, not that he had the slightest intention of backing them, but simply with a view of seeing whether his judgment would prove to be correct. Once or twice that solemn warning which Shrewster had given him crossed his mind, but there was little cause to feel afraid of trouble accruing to him in that wise at present. It was true, racing had begun again, and besides the Lincolnshire handicap many another big stake had been fought out in the Midlands; but he never went near these battlefields, and contented himself with reading what had happened in the daily papers.

But when a man is ripe for temptation it is odds that his bad angel speedily offers him the opportunity to indulge his weakness. As Maurice was strolling down Oxford Street one morning he ran across his friend Bob Grafton.

"I didn't know that you were back in town," said Maurice as they shook hands.

"Well, yes," replied Grafton; "it was getting high time to get back to the dear old wilderness of bricks and mortar. The hunting is about played out, at all events my two or three screws are, and the country is no good for the next five months. I'll tell you what we'll do—there can't be any harm in it now, you know—we'll go down next week and see the City and Suburban run. You cannot help taking some interest in racing as half-proprietor of the crack three-year-old of the season, and the Epsom handicap is a pretty race to see."

Now Maurice had vowed to himself that he would not do this thing; that though he could not help watching racing he would not go near it; but then that was while General Shrewster's word of warning still rang in his ears. That was some time ago now; it was all nonsense; he could look on and enjoy the sport without betting, and, after a moment's hesitation, he yielded to Grafton's

persuasions and agreed to accompany him to Epsom on the following Wednesday, and, this settled, the two friends separated for the present.

Maurice had, of course, seen big races run before, but for a young man with a strong taste for horses and hunting, racing had, so far, interested him singularly little; it was easily explained: he had, till the last year, never made any study of it, he barely knew the names of even the prominent equine celebrities, he had no knowledge of the colours of the owners; consequently a race to him so far had been like the flashing of a kaleidoscope, and even when the numbers were hoisted the names of the placed horses interested him but little. Now it was different; while at Tunnleton he had surreptitiously studied the calendar attentively and learnt the colours of prominent owners by heart, and he was looking forward with considerable excitement to visiting a race-course under different auspices and accompanied by such a capable mentor as Grafton.

Bob was true to his tryst at Victoria Station.

"Glorious day," he said, as they stepped into a railway carriage; "bright, clear, and no chance of rain; but your top-coat is hardly thick enough, it will be nipping on the Downs, you may depend upon it," and Bob glanced down with much satisfaction at the bulky ulster in which he was himself encased. "I'll tell you what, too," he continued: "I've got a rare hint about the City and Suburban, and we'll see what we can do with it when we get to the course."

Two or three strangers now got into the carriage, and Grafton at once dropped the subject and never opened his lips about it again till they found themselves on the lawn at Epsom, just outside the gate leading into Tattersall's ring.

"Now you wait outside for me while I go in and see what's doing," and then Bob slipped through the jealously-guarded portals of that inner inclosure.

Maurice lingered where he had been left, and, though it was some little time before Grafton returned, yet he found himself thoroughly amused; he fell across three or four old college friends and chatted pleasantly with them, and each of them at parting gave him a different tip for the big race. Maurice's own predilections ran in favour of a three-year-old called Wolfgang, a prominent favourite with the public, and he was wondering whether Grafton would coincide with him in that opinion, and getting slightly tired of the monotonous question "Do you want to do anything, sir?" or the slightly varied formula of "Want to back one, sir?" when Grafton touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"It's all right, old man, I've got a rare good price. Twenty to one to a pony is rather a nice bet if it comes off. I met Jack Danby at dinner last night, and he told me that all their stable are going for old Drumhead. The public don't fancy him a bit;

they think he's got too much weight, but he says the old horse is wonderfully well just now, has won a rare good trial, and is sure to be there or thereabouts at the finish. Now, Maurice, you shall be in a fiver with me. You must have a bet, you know; you can't come down and see the City and Suburban without having a trifle on it, and, win or lose, I'm sure old Drumhead will give you a good show for your money. And now let's come up to our stalls and see the race."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EPSOM DOWNS.

THEY reached their seats in very good time, and Maurice mentioned to his friend his own partiality for Wolfgang, who, as he pointed out, was very well in the handicap.

"That's just what it is," replied Grafton, "he is rather too well in. He's rather a headstrong horse, and wants a man to ride him. A big colt of that kind, to my thinking, always runs better when not so lightly weighted, for the simple reason the boys can't hold him. However we shall soon see all about it now; here they come."

And in threes and fours the competitors paced slowly past the stand.

"It is a large field," remarked Grafton, "and a horse wants to be lucky as well as good to win to-day; the starter will very likely have a job to get them off. Twenty-nine of them altogether. There goes Drumhead, Maurice, with the black jacket and crimson sleeves," and Grafton pointed to a big brown horse that was pacing soberly up the course on the far side. Another few minutes and the cavalcade came striding back once more past the stand in their preliminary canter.

"Here comes Wolfgang," cried Grafton, "the blue and white chevrons in the centre. Now do you see what I mean? He's a splendid mover, but look how he is tearing at his bit; it's as much as the boy can do to hold him now, and it's a chance whether he won't lose control over him in the actual race."

"Yes," laughed Maurice, "in a hunting-field I should say it was odds that a beggar like that spread-eagled the pack. But here comes Drumhead, a very sober, business-like gentleman that."

"Yes," said Grafton drily, "he is a veteran of five seasons, and knows better than to go using up himself and his jockey in that fashion. But isn't he a rare goer? Look at his long easy stride, and then he has such power. A few pounds more don't make much difference to him. Ah! Hampton, how are you?" continued Grafton, as he nodded to a wiry red-haired

man, who, in an ulster and a pot-hat, had just entered an adjoining stall. "What are they doing below?"

"Golden Dream is strong as brandy. His party are very confident, more confident than they have any right to be in such a big field. Five to one is hard to get against him now; but there's lots of 'em backed."

"What do you fancy yourself?" inquired Bob.

"Well, you see, Mr. Grafton," replied the bookmaker, "it's not quite my business to have fancies, but I think old Drumhead will run well, and I've kept Flycatcher to run for the book. His people think he'll give a good account of himself."

"It must be a good betting race."

"Very fair, sir," replied Hampton, "very fair. It won't hurt any of us much. But I always like to go for the gloves when I have a chance, and keep one."

"They are down at the post now," said Maurice, "and some of them appear very fractious."

Grafton looked steadily through his glass at the cluster of silken jackets grouped in the starter's charge. "Yes," he said, "there are three or four of them giving trouble. They're off!" he cried, and the shout was re-echoed from many a throat, only to be followed by a cry of "No, no! false start!" while some half-dozen horses were seen streaming to the top of the hill.

"That's bad for Wolfgang," continued Grafton; "it is as I thought, he's got away with the boy, like two or three more."

Wolfgang, indeed, proved more insubordinate than his companions, and reached the top of the hill before his jockey succeeded in pulling him up. It would be tedious to dwell upon the numerous false starts that took place—as is not uncommonly the case when there is a large number of competitors, and the field comprises three or four fractious youngsters. The bad manners of these sinners are infectious and make even elderly and well-disposed horses forget themselves. Suffice it to say that the backers of Wolfgang and Golden Dream passed a very bad three-quarters-of-an-hour. False start succeeded false start, and upon pretty nearly every occasion Wolfgang and Golden Dream were nearly at the top of the hill before they could be stopped. Latterly Flycatcher, who had been very well behaved during the first part of the proceedings, began to exhibit signs of temper, and even Drumhead and his experienced pilot began to manifest anxiety to be off. At last the welcome roar of "They're off!" was followed by no counter-cry of "False start!" and, with a sense of relief, the crowd saw the cluster of silken jackets stream up the hill and come sweeping through the furzes. If the backers of the two principal offenders had looked askance at the erratic proceedings of their favourites during the last forty minutes the supporters of Golden Dream had good right to be disgusted with that animal now. After being pretty well first away in every one of the previous "no goes" he

had distinguished himself by getting off very badly when the flag fell in earnest. Wolfgang, on the contrary, proved eager to begin till the last, and, coming through the furzes, assumed the command; he must have been a good colt, in rare condition, for notwithstanding all his breaks away, and that he had as good as taken a race out of himself before starting, he led his field a cracker till half-way down the hill leading to Tattenham Corner, when Flycatcher ran up to him, and, getting the inside berth round the famous turn, deprived him of the lead. By this time the scattering of the field was amazing; such tailing had rarely been witnessed, and, out of the twenty-nine who left the starter's hands not two minutes before, there were certainly little more than half-a-dozen left in the race.

At the road Flycatcher was still leading, with Wolfgang lying second. Then came three or four all in a cluster, and barely a couple of lengths behind; while stealing up on the rails, inch by inch, was old Drumhead, whose jockey, watching the leaders keenly as a hawk, already felt victory within his grasp. At the distance Wolfgang was done with, and Flycatcher came on with a lead of two lengths. Half-way up, there were only three left, and a cry of "Come on, Flycatcher," burst from the excited throats of his immediate partisans. At the "Bell" one of the three competitors compounded, while Drumhead rapidly closed with his opponent. Flycatcher's jockey cast an anxious look right and left, and became aware that on his near side the most dangerous horseman that ever steered thoroughbred over Epsom Downs was at his quarters. He had ridden steadily and with judgment up to this, now he lost his nerve, and, anxious to get home, sat down opposite the stand and commenced riding his horse in earnest. His grim opponent smiled as he found, despite his jockey's efforts, Flycatcher could not improve the half-length he held. Then he too began, and driving the old horse all he knew, landed him a clever winner by a good neck.

"A fine shave, Hampton, either way," cried Grafton; "and from here I can't be very sure, but I fancy Drumhead got up in time."

"Not a doubt about it, sir," replied the bookmaker; "if I wasn't sure myself the silence down below would tell me. Flycatcher would have been a clean haul for most of them, but few, I fancy, missed laying Drumhead any more than I did."

"Now, Maurice, we can go down and look after some lunch comfortably. I've collared four, and you are one hundred in, old boy."

Maurice said nothing, but he could not help reflecting that his determination not to bet had been promptly dissipated. It would be absurd to suppose that he felt penitent or uncomfortable about it, for winning a hundred pounds on a bright breezy April afternoon never oppressed anybody within my recollection. He had not meant to do it, and, great as his excitement had been over

the race, he had honestly never thought of the bet he had upon it. His interest had been absorbed, first in the bold front shown by his own selection, Wolfgang, for so great a part of the distance, then in the sudden advent of Flycatcher, the bookmaker's tip, and lastly, in the triumph of his friend, Bob Grafton's favourite, Drumhead. It was some time before they could make their way downstairs, for the crowd were, like themselves, hunger-stricken, and the staircases of the grand stand are by no means broad and stately. Mr. Hampton was jammed up with them on the way down, and, slightly to Maurice's surprise, Grafton insisted on his coming to luncheon with them. The beauty of the hunting-field, quoth Mr. Punch, is that it enables all classes to mix, but for purposes of amalgamation the hunting-field in that matter cannot be compared with the race-course. At length they made their way into the chief refreshment saloon, where Grafton at once ordered everything, including a couple of bottles of champagne. Everything, as he explained, simply meant such food as the hurried waiters could lay their hands upon; while, as for the liquor, "we can only hope it may be drinkable."

Mr. Hampton ate with all the equanimity and rapidity characteristic of his class. They are perfectly used to the losing and winning of money, and as convinced as the proprietors of Monte Carlo that they must win in the long-run, but of time for revelry they are aware they have little during business hours. Mr. Hampton was not long finishing his lunch and tumbler of champagne, and then announced that he must be once more "up and doing." Grafton and Maurice lingered some little time longer.

"I don't care much about the minor races here," said Bob. "We've seen the big event, and, after we've had a stroll through the paddock, I'm good to get back to town again as soon as you like. Sure to see a lot of fellows there, you know, who can tell us all about the race, and sure, too, to encounter several others who always said old Drumhead would win, but who for varied reasons never backed him."

Maurice returned to town in excellent spirits, and, having thoroughly enjoyed his day, I'm afraid felt but small compunctions concerning that profitable wager that he had allowed himself to be led into. He had no intention of taking to betting, but this was just an odd instance that wouldn't occur again, and as for enjoying a day's racing occasionally it was quite possible to do that without gambling; and, now he had determined to lay aside his sacred calling, there would be no shocking of people's prejudices on that account. From this out he paid as much attention to turf news as if he had been a declared votary of the sport; and as the Epsom carnival drew near Maurice got deeply interested in the probable results. He had not been on a race-course since the triumph of Drumhead, but he had made up his mind to see the Derby, and more especially the Oaks, run for. The "Wandering

Nun" had made a successful *début* at Newmarket, and carried off the Thousand Guineas in a canter, and racing men were pretty nearly unanimously of opinion that the ladies' race at Epsom was at her mercy provided she kept well.

The last week in May saw Maurice, accompanied by his friend Grafton, once again on the Epsom lawn. He had been down on the Derby day and had been persuaded by Bob to have ten pounds on the winner of that race. Between that and his half of the stakes for the Thousand Guineas his balance at his banker's waxed fat, and Maurice, ever sanguine, looked upon the success of the "Wandering Nun" this afternoon as a foregone conclusion. Grafton had left him to see what was doing in the inner ring, which Maurice, not being a member of Tattersall's, was, of course, unable to enter. Suddenly his attention was arrested by a voice he thought he recognized vociferating, "The 'Wandering Nun' I'll lay against, here's four to one the 'Wandering Nun.'" Looking in the direction from which the voice proceeded he at once recognized Hampton just the other side the railings which divided the Tattersall inclosure from the Lawn. It flashed through Maurice's mind that this was a chance. The last quotation he had heard against the favourite for the Oaks had been five to two. Leaning over the rails he touched the bookmaker with his umbrella and said, "I'll take fours, Mr. Hampton."

"Very well, sir. What shall it be in? Will you have it in ponies?"

"No," exclaimed Maurice, "I want four hundred to a hundred; will you lay it?"

"Certainly," replied the bookmaker. "Let's see—Mr. Enby, isn't it?"

"No, that's not quite right," replied Maurice—"Enderby. You met me with Mr. Grafton at the Spring Meeting. You may remember."

"Certainly," replied the bookmaker, who, like most of his class, had a good memory for faces, and then, having made a rapid note of the transaction, he turned round and once more vociferated his war-cry.

Some little time after Grafton rejoined him, and Maurice at once informed him of what he had done.

"Backed it for a hundred?" said Grafton. "The deuce you have. Surely, your share of the stakes should be good enough for you, and I'll tell you what: I'm very much afraid it isn't coming off this time. I've not been able to catch anybody who can tell me anything about it; but there's a screw loose about the 'Wandering Nun.' Those fellows in there lay as if they knew something, and I saw one or two good judges very busy covering their money. It's not a very healthy sign when the odds against a favourite expand just before the race."

As they made their way to the coign of vantage from which

they meant to view the race, two men who were ascending the stairs just before them enlightened their minds on the subject. "No, the 'Wandering Nun' won't win; she is not even first favourite just now. All the better for us. With her out of the way Belladonna ought to be about good enough."

"Have you heard what's the matter with the 'Nun'?"

"Gone slightly amiss at the eleventh hour, I fancy, as these fillies will sometimes out of sheer perversity. Some of them seem to have got a hint of it in the inclosure, for Hampton, Weston, and two or three more of the most deadly pencillers out, have never ceased betting against her all the morning."

"Pleasant news," said Maurice, with a smile; "however, I can afford to forgive her if any one can."

The race for the Oaks was devoid of all interest as far as Maurice's champion was concerned; from the fall of the flag the "Wandering Nun" either could not or would not go near her horses. She never looked dangerous from first to last, and finished an indifferent sixth in a field of ten runners. Belladonna and Tamarinde fought out a rattling race, which terminated in favour of the latter by half a length.

"She is not herself, and showed temper to boot, but that running is too bad to be true, and the 'Wandering Nun' will win you a hat-full of money yet, old fellow, before she has done," remarked Grafton.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

EDITH GETS OVER IT.

ALL great gatherings of the people are remarkable for one thing, to wit, those whom you wish to see you never meet, whilst those whom you would rather did not see you there, do. Your puritanical uncle, from whom you had expectations, who regards racing as the acme of iniquity, is sure to hear that you graced the Derby with your presence. Your spinster aunt, who has strong and intolerant feelings about the scarlet lady of Babylon, is certain to be informed of your attendance at any High Church temple of worship. You cannot as a rule join in any celebration which your dear relatives consider unfitting without its speedily coming to their ears. Our sins have a greater tendency to make themselves heard of than our good deeds. Maurice was most assuredly not thinking of Tunnleton during the Epsom week, but there were Tunnleton men there who saw him, and a large section of Tunnleton is even now bewailing his backslidings and misfortunes.

It is all very well, said Tunnleton, for General Shrewster and one or two more to express their belief in Mr. Enderby's innocence of the accusations laid against him, but "what was he doing at

Epsom? Answer me that," demanded General Praun, fiercely; "I am told too that he has lost a very large sum of money."

As Maurice was now currently known to be the nephew of the owner of the "Wandering Nun," the defeat of that animal would naturally give rise to some such rumour in the little town, and it was upon that report that the latter part of General Praun's statement was founded. As for Maurice he troubled himself little about Tunnleton's opinion. He had received his first rebuff on a race-course. He had made so sure of the Wandering Nun's victory that he felt very much as if he had lost a large sum of money, but General Shrewster had gauged him pretty accurately—he was just the man of which bold and daring bettors are made. He was not in the least depressed at his defeat, but simply keen and sanguine to recover his losses. His successes had been so unbroken, for every victory of Uncle John's flying filly had been practically a success for him, that he must have been a very craven to have been cast down by the first reverse. This was a quiet week, but next came Ascot, and there Maurice had made up his mind to plunge into the thick of the fray. Even Bessie, though very far from intending it, confirmed him in his resolution. He had mentioned neither his little bet on the Spring Handicap nor his big one on the Oaks, but, like himself, in spite of all her prudent resolutions, she had gradually come to look on Uncle John's racing successes as a welcome contribution to their income, and this last would have been such a grand prize. Such a sum as two thousand pounds odd, which she had come to regard as sure to fall into their hands, was bitter disappointment to be bereft of, and she more than once laughingly expressed such disappointment to her husband.

"Never mind," he rejoined, "our good fairy has one or two engagements at Ascot, and we must hope that next week will find her restored to health. The sporting papers all say it was merely a temporary ailment."

"You won't go down, Maurice, will you?" she inquired, a little anxiously.

"Oh, yes I shall," he replied. "It's no distance, and I thoroughly enjoy the sport."

"I am afraid Tunnleton will be more convinced than ever that you bet, if they hear of you at all these race-courses," said Bessie, with a smile.

"And with some justice at last," thought Maurice. "Nonsense!" he said. "What's Tunnleton to me, or me to Tunnleton? Bar the Chyltons and Shrewster, I think we have left no friends behind us there."

"Well, I must say I liked the Molecombes, they were very civil to us at the last, and very anxious to make amends for having lent too credulous an ear to that precious impostor Richard Madingley. By the way, I had a letter from Edith this morning, and, what is

more, it contains a mysterious message to you. She desires her kindest regards, hopes you will forgive her being so rude to you, and bids me say that she bears what you told her constantly in mind ; and now, Maurice," cried Bessie quickly, " what did you tell her ? "

" A mere nothing ; only gave her my opinion regarding Richard Madingley, which she naturally refused to believe true. I am very glad to see that she at all events thinks that I may be right after all."

" She talks of coming up to town in the course of next week, when she hopes to see us."

There was one person who shook his head, though not so noisily as General Praun, yet much more seriously, over Maurice's proceedings. It so happened that General Shrewster had heard of Maurice's presence at the Spring Meeting, and he feared that his prediction was about to be realized.

" It will be the ruin of him, that life in London," he muttered, " with any amount of racing going on all round him. He will begin attending all these meetings, and as for a man of his temperament not betting it is preposterous to think of. Ah ! if there was only a chance of getting him into the service in some way. To pack him off to India, or rattle him out on service, would be the making of him just now, but I am afraid at his age there is no opening at present ; odd, too, that we are not in a petty quarrel with somebody."

However, for a wonder, the country was not engaged in protecting its frontiers, punishing its feudatories, or annexing its neighbours, and soldiers had nothing for it but to regret the stagnation of their trade.

Mrs. Enderby was very pleased in the course of the week at receiving a visit from Edith Molecombe. That young lady was unfeignedly glad to find her hostess at home, and seemed still more pleased at discovering that Maurice was likely to be in later in the afternoon. She wanted very much to make friends with Mr. Enderby, who, she had taken it into her head, had a shrewd suspicion of her contemplated elopement, though she hardly anticipated the chance of saying much to him. As it turned out, when he did make his appearance, he was accompanied by his friend Mr. Grafton, and the conversation became, of course, general.

Grafton had never as yet set eyes upon Edith Molecombe, and, knowing her history as he did, looked upon her with no little curiosity. She was looking her best ; the worry of her disappointment had imparted a refinement to her features which they had hitherto lacked. She was a nice-looking girl, of medium height, and with a neat figure, which showed off her dainty muslin draperies to the utmost advantage ; and, in spite of Miss Torkesly's remark that it was high time she got married, although past her majority, she was still a long way off being an irreclaimable spinster.

" Well worth interfering about," thought Grafton ; " it would

have been a sin that a nice lady-like girl like that should have fallen into the hands of an unscrupulous blackleg."

In spite of his passion for sport of all description, Grafton was a man fond of ladies' society. He could drop all the shibboleth of the race-course in their presence, and, rarer faculty still, could refrain from chanting his prowess amid the turnips or in the hunting-field to their weary ears. He chatted away to his hostess and Edith Molecombe about all the gossip of the day, and what was doing in town, in the liveliest fashion. Fancy-fairs, exhibitions, Royal patronages, Bob Grafton had attended them all and had a piquant anecdote to tell about many of them. He was a popular man, and sure of being heartily received at many a London tea-table could he only be entrapped thither. It was not till the last moment that Grafton alluded to the forthcoming Ascot, and then it was briefly to arrange with Maurice where they should meet, but that allusion produced results which Bob never dreamed of.

"How I should like to see Ascot!" exclaimed Miss Molecombe, "but the Millisons, with whom I am staying, say they cannot find any one to go halves in a box, and Mr. Millison declares that he cannot afford to take a whole one."

"And I have never seen Ascot," cried Bessie, "and really," she continued, with a slight toss of her head, "as I am never likely to be part proprietor of another race-horse, I ought to be allowed to see the 'Wandering Nun,' for once. Can't you manage it, Maurice?"

"Of course he can, and must," replied Grafton; "the idea of a lady who owns the best three-year-old of the year not going down to see her mare run! How can you expect her to win, Mrs. Enderby, if you don't personally smile on her exertions?"

Maurice was rather in a dilemma; he did not want to take his wife down to Ascot, but, considering that all the money which had come to them by means of the "Wandering Nun" was virtually hers, it did seem rather ungracious to refuse her request, so after some little hesitation he yielded, and said that if a box could be procured so late in the day he should be very glad to share one with Mr. Millison.

"Hold him to that, Mrs. Enderby, and never fear but what I'll find the box. It's of course a little late in the day, but there are always a few come in at the last moment belonging for the most part to regular tenants whom something suddenly prevents from attending," and with this Mr. Grafton made his adieux and departed.

"Do you think we shall get the box?" exclaimed Miss Molecombe, with eyes sparkling at the prospect of witnessing the, as yet, unknown glories of Ascot.

"I can only say the affair could not be in better hands. Grafton knows all sorts of people, and if the thing is to be managed he is the man to do it."

"Yes, Edith," said Mrs. Enderby, who believed immensely in her husband's friend; "I don't think we shall be disappointed, so you may look out your best frocks."

"It will be delightful. I must run home now and tell Mr. Millison the good news; and, Mr. Enderby," she continued, in a low voice, "I want to apologize for being so rude to you that night; from several things I have learnt lately I am afraid you have told me the truth. I don't want to say anything more on the subject, but you may be sure I shall not forget your warning. Good-bye."

"I think she has pretty well got over it," said Maurice when he had returned from seeing his visitor out.

"Yes; there is one thing that, once convinced of it, would help a proud girl like Edith Molecombe much in getting over a disappointment; her pride would be so wounded at the thought of there being good reason to doubt her lover being a gentleman."

"Ah!" said Maurice, "I believe distraction is always recommended for these cases,"—he was still feeling a little annoyed at the idea of being saddled with ladies at Ascot—"I suppose Edith is just in the state described in the old song:

'From place to place they hurry me to banish my regret,
And when they win a smile from me they fancy I forget;'

and, as far as my experience goes, they are pretty well justified in doing so. I don't suppose, if it is a fine day and her dress fits, that we shall be wrong in supposing that Edith has forgotten."

"You needn't sneer in that way, Maurice; it would be rather odd if she hadn't. Don't you know that from the day Richard Madingley left Tunnleton she has never even heard of him? That is about three-quarters of a year ago; I think most girls would have ceased to think about such a lover as hers was in that time."

"It would be very curious if it should be so, but do you know, Bessie, it's just possible that Edith might see her old lover at Ascot. I have never seen him myself during my few days' racing experience, but Grafton tells me that he has caught sight of him once or twice, and that whatever he might have been when he was at Tunnleton he has little doubt now that he is enrolled in the ranks of the ring."

"We will hope she won't," replied Bessie; "surely we shall not be mixed up with those sort of people?"

"No, but I saw at Epsom that some of the smaller bookmakers roamed about in pursuit of their calling in front of the stand, and I daresay they do the same at Ascot; however, it is not very likely to happen, and, let Grafton only get us the box, no doubt we shall have a good time."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A BLACK ASCOT.

NEVER was there greater promise of Queen's weather than the Ascot week held out for the royal meeting. No party on the Waterloo platform was in higher spirits than the Millisons and Enderbys. Old Millison was the head of a well-established broker's house on the Stock Exchange, and dearly loved a bit of racing now and then. A judicious *douceur* to the guard enabled them to obtain a compartment to themselves, and, furnished with race-cards, the whole party were speedily engaged in speculation as to what would win the Queen's Vase. Even the ladies caught the enthusiasm, desired to be instructed, and expressed their intention of having a bet upon that race. And Grafton soon found himself invested with the office of the ladies' commissioner, while they themselves plunged into an animated discussion as to what extent their investments were to be carried. Miss Molecombe solemnly handed a five-pound note over to Grafton, which he was adjured to lay out to the best advantage. Mr. Millison deposited a similar stake on behalf of his wife, and then Maurice handed over a like sum on the part of Bessie. Mrs. Enderby was in a state of great excitement as to whether the "Wandering Nun" would run or not for the Queen's Vase. The mare was reported amongst the arrivals at Ascot, and was also coloured on the card. But Grafton rather inclined to the belief that she would not start for that race.

"You see, Mrs. Enderby, the 'Wandering Nun' has two or three valuable engagements this week, and as she wasn't quite herself ten days ago it is probable they will keep her for something that is run over a less severe course than the Queen's Vase."

Now it had been arranged that the ladies should run down for the first day of the meeting and the Cup day. And now arose another problem for Grafton to solve. Mrs. Enderby was naturally excessively anxious to see this famous mare, of which she was half owner, run. Miss Molecombe was equally decided that above all things any race in which the "Wandering Nun" figured must be witnessed. But here came a little divergence of view; whereas Bessie and Mrs. Millison had only suggested a change of day if necessary, Edith thought that they had better adhere to their original arrangement, and come down an extra day if circumstances required it. Racing might amuse Miss Molecombe, or it might not, but she had at all events made up her mind to thoroughly satisfy herself on this point.

At last Ascot station is reached, and, descending from their carriage, the party followed the throng, making their way up the narrow lane leading to the back of the stand. No sooner are the

ladies comfortably installed in their box than Maurice and Grafton sally forth across the lawn towards the betting-ring to ascertain what is doing, leaving Mr. Millison to do *cicerone* and point out the humours of the course to the two neophytes. Their box was on the second tier, and looking down upon the crowd that thronged the lawn and race-course afforded ample amusement to Mrs. Enderby and Edith. With their glasses they could see clearly the motley crowd on the far side, drags covered with men whose appearance unmistakably stamped them as wont to mingle in the clubs of St. James's and the drawing-rooms of Belgravia. Other drags there were in which the ladies looked quite as smartly dressed, but exhibited much want of that repose of manner which characterized their neighbours. The men too in these latter were remarkable for a brilliancy of attire, which, if not quite to be picked to pieces, gave a vague idea of not being exactly correct as a whole. There were the sable sons of minstrelsy, the tumblers, the gipsies, girls with the last music-hall songs, strong men, fire-eaters, card-sellers, and all the miscellaneous crowd that mingle in the throng of a big race-meeting. Although watching them from afar, Edith through her glasses could see quite well enough to be amused at the motley gathering. At length a line of police marched steadily down the centre of the course, other mounted policemen accompanying them, and in an incredibly short space of time the broad green ribbon is cleared of the loungers who but a few minutes since had crowded it. Another minute, and a ringing cheer some distance down the course announces that the royal *cortège* is close at hand, and immediately afterwards some half-dozen open carriages, with the Prince and Princess of Wales in the leading one, passed leisurely up the centre of the course, and deposited their contents at the door of the Royal Stand.

The sharp note of the saddling-bell is now heard, and a minute or two later the numbers go up for the Trial Stakes. There are five runners, and, as is usually the case in this race, one of them is at once made a pretty hot favourite.

Grafton and Maurice hurry in at the last moment, and Bob informs the ladies that he has taken two to one against Marmaduke, for what he calls the Ladies' Betting Association, Limited; that he has backed it himself, and fancies it should win. But the Trial Stakes, which inaugurates the meeting, is generally an uncertain race and wont to result in discomfiture to the backers to start with. It follows its charter this afternoon, and our party see their horse beaten in a canter by a little-fancied outsider, about whom very long odds had been offered a few moments before; however, nobody recks much of the first reverse of a big meeting; there is plenty of time for us to recover from such petty disaster; and Grafton, as he laughed gaily and said, "Better luck next time," little dreamed of the scale upon which Maurice had commenced operations. Enderby had made up his mind to bet in

earnest for once, and had unluckily conceived a hazy notion of a system about backing horses. He did not know it, but the idea was as old as the hills, and had brought many a gallant backer to grief in his day. It was simply increasing your stakes after every rebuff, on the principle that your turn must come, and that when it does you will have recovered all your losses and a good deal besides. Maurice had lost fifty pounds upon this race, and had already determined to have a hundred on the next.

"Is my horse going to start, Mr. Grafton?" exclaimed Mrs. Enderby. "What have you heard about her in the ring?"

"No, you won't see her to-day; she is not to go for the Vase, but I hear she is to run on Thursday for the rich St. James's Palace Stakes. Not quite perhaps all the honour and glory of winning the Vase, but a much richer prize, and if the 'Wandering Nun' is at all herself she should win without difficulty."

The Gold Vase, which immediately succeeded, terminated, as the prelude to luncheon always ought to do, in the triumph of the favourite, and a monetary success to the little party all round, and they adjourned to their cold lamb, lobster salad, and champagne, which Millison's servants had laid daintily out on the lawn at the back of the stand, in the highest of spirits. The stockbroker was a lover of the flesh-pots, and had a capital notion of doing things properly, and two bulky hampers in charge of his butler and footman had accompanied them from town. Maurice, in particular, was in high feather; he had put a hundred on the winner and was consequently more enamoured of his theory than ever. They were very merry over the lunch, and, when they trooped back to the box to once more enjoy the sport, Miss Molecombe vowed that racing was the most exciting amusement in which she had ever embarked, and that a proprietress of race-horses like Mrs. Enderby was a woman wondrously favoured of fortune.

"You will have to lay out some of your winnings," exclaimed Edith, "in purchasing two or three more racers. It must be so nice to have a few of one's own."

"No, no, Mrs. Enderby," laughed Grafton, "we must make a great deal more money than we've done so far before we start our stud. You are to appoint me your master of the horse, remember, and I can't authorize our beginning as yet."

It would be tedious to follow our friends through all the vicissitudes of fortune. Interesting as the fierce battle between backer and bookmaker is to those engaged, it is somewhat wearisome to read about. Suffice it to say, that wagering under the sage advice of Bob Grafton, when after the last race but one they made their way back to the train, they were all winners with one exception. Flushed with success, Maurice had trusted to his own judgment instead of relying upon his mentor, and unfortunately had done so for a considerable sum. He alone had lost money on the day;

the others, although far from requiring sacks to carry home their winnings, were still victors on the afternoon; and Edith Molecombe, at all events, was convinced that racing was the sport of kings, as, indeed, it may well be termed so far as English monarchs are concerned.

Many a black Ascot has opened as seductively as this one, and looked like a very garden of Bendemeer to the fashionable London throng, who have already found their resources severely taxed to keep pace with the constantly recurring exigencies of the season. The veterans put but little faith in these gay openings, and the fielders blench not a whit because the first day goes against them. The former have seen the storm-clouds gather heavily round the Royal Hunt Cup—that prettiest of gambling races—and the decision of the Wokinghams cause Ascot to close, metaphorically speaking, in a gloom dark as Erebus. It had been settled that the ladies were not to go down on the off-day, but the men all met again at Waterloo, Maurice keener than ever for the fray, and with a firm conviction, shared indeed by the other two, that it was a card easy to pick winners from. But disaster came with the opening race, when the favourite, upon whom two, and in some instances even three, to one were laid, was most ignominiously beaten. The second race was attended with a similar result, and then came the pause which usually precedes the Royal Hunt Cup. The competitors were numerous, and the betting remarkably heavy; but the powerful stable that owned Duke Humphrey were apparently not to be stayed by any efforts of the bookmakers, and continued to back their horse. Two of the patricians connected with that stable were as shrewd judges and as bold speculators as any men on the turf, and sheer weight of metal kept their horse at the head of the poll, although many of the others were also backed heavily. Acting under the advice of Grafton, Maurice had thrown in his lot with Duke Humphrey.

He was standing against the rails of the lawn, scanning the competitors as they cantered past, when a voice he thought he knew struck upon his ear.

"Do as you like," said the speaker, "but I tell you it is so. I know all that; I've heard it all before. Lord Lynton and Sir Ralph don't throw their money away, I grant you. They make mistakes at times, and they're making one here. There's a tout I employ on those Downs, and he's about the best of his calling in England. They've tried Duke Humphrey all right enough, but their training-ground is not the new mile at Ascot, and they have not yet quite opened their eyes to the fact that their horse is a rogue."

Maurice had recognized the speaker by this, and looked round to make sure that he was right in his conjecture. Richard Madingley was turned slightly away from him, but the satchel hung from his shoulder left no doubt about the part he played on the race-course.

"And you think, then," said Dick's companion, a somewhat over-dressed young man, "that Jerry can beat the Duke?"

"No, not if the Duke would try; but he won't like the hill, and he won't like the struggle; and so I recommend you, if you want to get out of your scrape, to back Jerry this time. You can get a good price, at least you could just now. I've made my book for him, and backed him besides."

Maurice wondered if there could be anything in what Madingley said; he had looked with rather contempt upon that gentleman's judgment at Tunnleton, and considered that he himself was a far better judge, which, had he analyzed it, was simply based upon the fact that he happened to know more about the "Wandering Nun" than Madingley. No, he decided if he was to let his own opinion be swayed by every idle rumour he heard, he might back half the horses in the race. "Jerry," he muttered contemptuously, and here he turned round and asked one of the outside bookmakers what that horse's price was.

"I've done on the race, sir," replied the man civilly, "but I laid one hundred to six about that one."

Maurice walked quietly back to his box to see the race, where he found his two friends duly installed, and with their glasses in their hands. There was the usual slight delay at the post, and then the bell announced that the field for the Hunt Cup was away.

"We can't see 'em till they top the hill," cried Grafton. "Keep your glasses on its crest, Maurice. All right so far," he exclaimed, as the charging squadron, glittering like a tulip bed in the summer sun, flashed in sight, "Duke Humphrey is lying fourth."

And now the squandering began. A little more and there were only six in it, opposite the stand there were but three. Duke Humphrey was leading, but sticking to his quarters like a bur on the hand were a pair of antagonists who promised to give trouble. Another stride or two and the one on the near side has shot his bolt and gives way beaten, but the one on the off closes with him inch by inch, and no sooner does the Duke find this doughty opponent at his girths than he lays back his ears, and swerving across the course enables Jerry to win by a good half-length. From the box they cannot be sure of the result, but when the numbers go up Maurice sees that Dick Madingley has been at all events right this time. The ill-luck of the backers continues through the afternoon, favourite after favourite goes down, and on the homeward journey Maurice feels a little serious when he reflects upon his losses.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE ST. JAMES'S PALACE STAKES.

MAURICE had begun the week with a very handsome balance at his banker's, derived entirely from the victories of Uncle John's flying filly, but he might well look serious when he thought of the inroads he had made upon that balance during the last two days. The latent demon of gambling had been aroused in him, and he had already discovered that it requires a man of iron will to follow a system on the turf, and a little more knowledge of that amusement will show him that a system is fallible on a race-course as it is at the gaming-table. It is certainly harder to carry out, for in the latter case you will be allowed to pursue your theory untroubled by advice, whilst in the former you are generally advised of nearly as many winners as there are runners in the stake about to be contended for. Neither his wife nor Grafton had the slightest idea of the magnitude of his speculations.

Mr. Hampton the bookmaker was a prominent member of Tattersall's, and at Ascot had a particular coign of vantage, which custom seemed to have made his own. At the corner of the inner ring, adjacent to the Grand Stand, and just beneath the lower gallery of the Iron stand, was a square pillar about five feet high; from the top of this Mr. Hampton was wont to offer to give or take the odds to all comers. It was an excellent position for his purpose; everybody could find him, and he was both within reach of those in Tattersall's inclosure and also of those without the pale. His secretary stood, book in hand, at the foot of the pillar, taking note of his transactions as quickly as they were made, and such was the swarm of customers at the foot of the pillar that it was all the secretary could do to write down his employer's wagers.

Long habit had made the pair thoroughly expert at their business, and it was rarely that Hampton's memory faltered as to what sum he had laid against any particular horse. It was with this man that Maurice had carried on his speculations. He could not go into the inner ring, and in the outer lawn had not the knowledge which would enable him to distinguish good men and true from the pirates who mingled with them.

Hampton knew Mr. Enderby to be a friend of Grafton, and that had been introduction enough for him; besides, he had given the bookmaker a hundred-pound note through the medium of Grafton, when the "Wandering Nun" was beaten for the Oaks, and therefore Hampton had been only too glad to welcome him as a new client.

There had never been such a glorious Ascot week known, said the pleasure-loving dames and demoiselles who, robed in their

freshest and prettiest, thronged the Waterloo platform on the day of the Gold Cup.

"There had never been such a deuce of a time seen," said their male belongings, who had passed the last eight-and-forty-hours in weary battle with the bookmakers. Men studied the card gravely, and pronounced it promising.

"A winning card, Mrs. Enderby," said Grafton gaily; "better than the first day's even, and we did pretty well then."

"And it need to be," replied old Millison, "for if they don't have a change for the better the gentlemen will be all clean broke."

"We are going to see your colours out to-day, Mrs. Enderby, and I think we must all have a plunge on the 'Wandering Nun.' She ought to win the St. James's Palace Stakes, if well, and they would hardly have sent her to Ascot unless she was supposed to have a race in her."

"Yes, Mrs. Enderby," exclaimed Edith, "when we see your pretty blue and white sleeves go by victorious our throats must make the welkin ring. Isn't that the proper way to put it, Mr. Grafton?—and oh! by the way, what *is* the welkin?"

"That's known only to the poets," replied Grafton, "and the craft keep that mystery safely to themselves."

They arrived at Ascot in time to see the royal *cortège* sweep up the course in state; the Master of the Buckhounds, attended by his huntsman and whips, riding at the head of the procession. There was much cheering from all parts of the course, and much waving of pocket handkerchiefs from the Grand Stand, as the prince and princess bowed their acknowledgments. Royalty safely disposed of, racing people settled down to the regular business of the day.

It would have been well for Maurice Enderby if he could have overheard a conversation which took place on the corner of the lawn next the race-course about this very time. Mr. Pick and Richard Madingley had been holding grave conference over the afternoon programme, at the conclusion of which Mr. Pick remarked—

"We had a rare innings yesterday. I tell you what, Dick, the swells looked blue enough over it, but I've a strong idea that indigo will be nothing to 'em by the time the card's finished to-day. This 'Wandering Nun' will be facer the first, there'll be heavy plunging on her, and I've got a hint from a man I can depend on that she is not quite up to concert-pitch."

"There is one thing more; you remember that young parson who spoilt my game at Tunnleton. I always stuck to it he was a betting-man, and he is here, and what is more he is backing 'em and no mistake. I was just putting a young friend of mine on Jerry for the Hunt Cup yesterday, when I twigged him with his ears back listening to all I was saying. Well, after that I stalked my gentleman and found him interviewing Hampton before every

race. Now I owe that fellow a pretty heavy score, and I should like to settle a bit of it at this meeting. If you give me a lift I think we can induce him to back a loser or two pretty heavily."

"Well," rejoined Mr. Pick, "from all you've told me I shouldn't think you would be the man to whom he would come for advice, but if you can speak to him put him on the 'Wandering Nun' to begin with."

"I can't speak to him for one thing," rejoined the other, "and he'll back that one safe enough without ever a hint from me; he's always been mad about her; no, from my being right about Jerry he's pretty sure to pay attention to what I say; I want him to overhear a little talk between you and me before the Gold Cup; you understand?"

Mr. Pick grinned in reply.

"Yes," he said, "that also promises to be a queer race, but we'll put the parson on the winner, no fear—rather!" and, with an ominous wink, Mr. Pick disappeared through the wicket of the inner ring.

One or two minor races were disposed of to start with, resulting in no material difference between backers and fielders, and then the numbers were hoisted for the St. James's Palace Stakes. The "Wandering Nun," was the cynosure of all eyes in the pack; she was pronounced a grand mare, and many of her admirers marvelled not a little how she had lost the Oaks; her coat shone like satin, and the crowd generally announced her in splendid condition. One or two old hands, and more especially those who knew the mare best, shook their heads and muttered "She would be the better for another gallop or two," but these cavillers were deemed hypercritical, and the crowd, full of enthusiasm for John Madingley's filly, rushed back to the ring prepared to stake their money freely on what many of them declared was the "best thing of the meeting." The fielders were apparently of the same way of thinking, and declined, in the first instance, to do business under three to one "on," and some of the irrepressible, who are always anxious to be early in the market, laid those odds on the "Wandering Nun." The bookmakers took a point shorter later on, but excitable Maurice, one can easily imagine, had not waited for that but promptly laid Hampton six hundred pounds to two hundred on the mare as soon as the betting opened.

That there was great excitement in Mrs. Enderby's box it is needless to say. The ladies had not only invested one of those subscribed fivers but all such winnings as still remained to them from the Tuesday, and their glasses were riveted on the "Wandering Nun" the minute she made her appearance. A slashing, dark chestnut mare, with not a speck of white about her save the blaze on her face, and looking really fit to run for her life, except to a thoroughly trained eye, owned by a man also well acquainted with the mare. The ladies were enthusiastic, and even Grafton, accustomed as he

was to the vicissitudes of the race-course and carefully as he had scanned the "Wandering Nun" in the paddock, told Mrs. Enderby that he thought she was sure to see her favourite win to-day.

The race may be told in a few words; the "Wandering Nun" apparently held her opponents safe until she reached the distance, then it was seen that she was palpably in difficulties, and though she struggled gamely till her jockey ceased riding, she only finished a bad third to two animals of infinitely inferior class to herself. The want of condition up the punishing Ascot mile had beaten her.

A fierce shout of exultation with which the ring welcomed the downfall of the favourite was succeeded by an ominous silence. Everybody connected with racing knew that one of the heaviest betting meetings seen of late was going all one way, and that the week was likely to end in wide-spread disaster and leave many a gap in the fashionable world; even the ring looked somewhat askance at its good fortune, and a hard-headed northern member of the fraternity was heard to say to one of his exultant brethren—

"Noa, noa, laad, it's too good; if the swells don't have a turn or two before we finish there will be no saatlting worth speaking of."

In Mrs. Enderby's box there was much lamentation; not only had they lost their money, and women never like that, but they were all much mortified at seeing the famous mare, with which they had proudly identified themselves, beaten, and it was with a sense of relief that Bessie and Edith Molecombe welcomed Grafton's proposal that they should take a turn on the lawn and then walk up the course, have a look into the royal inclosure, and see the horses parade for the Gold Cup. Maurice had disappeared the moment the race was decided, and Mrs. Millison, a portly lady not much given to exertion, declined to leave her chair even to feast her eyes on the millinery triumphs displayed in front of the Royal Stand; however she made no objection to being left alone, and so, under the charge of Mr. Millison and Grafton, the others sallied forth.

Like many another plunger of that memorable Ascot, Maurice glanced moodily at his betting-book and wondered whether he could afford to go on; he knew very well that he had no more right to continue than he ever had to have begun, but still, thanks to the thousand guineas, he had not yet got to the end of his balance at his banker's. It was impossible that things could go on like this; it would never do to give up now, luck must turn. He sauntered idly towards the entrance of the inner ring.

The next race, which was a small one, had virtually resolved itself into a match; it looked pretty well a certainty for one, and, flushed with success, the ring were liberal enough to take short odds about the result. Once more did Maurice boldly reply to Hampton's challenge, and this time his venture was crowned with

success. He had the satisfaction of feeling that he had reduced his losses to some small extent. He had not been up to the box to see this race but had viewed it from the rails, and, as he turned away, he found himself face to face with Dick Madingley.

"How do you do, Mr. Enderby?" said Dick; "you were pretty severe upon me because the people at Tunnleton took an idea into their heads and declared that I was a liar and impostor; do you think there is much to choose between us now?"

"You'll be good enough not to address yourself to me in future," rejoined Maurice haughtily.

"Now don't go on in that way, Mr. Enderby. I'll own I couldn't stand you at Tunnleton because I looked upon you as an arrant hypocrite; you declared you never bet on races."

"Nor did I," rejoined Maurice quickly.

"No matter; I suppose you'll hardly pretend you don't now, and I like you all the better for it. I'd do you a good turn if you would let me."

"I want neither your advice nor your conversation," replied Maurice coldly.

"Go your own way then," replied Dick; "you must have had a pretty bad time, like the rest of them, and the upset of the 'Wandering Nun' would not improve things for you; she was a favourite of yours from the first. Oh, you needn't be afraid," continued Dick, as Maurice made a gesture of impatience; "after the Gold Cup is over perhaps you'll wish you had listened to what I had got to say," and, turning sharply on his heel, Madingley disappeared amongst the throng.

Maurice could hardly suppose that Dick would do him a good turn. He must have been singularly blind if he had failed to see the rage and malice concentrated in Madingley's face at their last interview. He had not been the cause of his exposure in Tunnleton, but it was he who had baffled his projects by threatening to divulge the further information he had acquired concerning him. No living thing likes being hunted, except perhaps foxes, and man is wont to treasure up fierce resentment against his social pursuer. No, whatever his motive might be, it would be absurd to suppose that he could feel any desire to be of use to him, Maurice Enderby. And yet Maurice could not divest himself of the idea that Dick was really in possession of mysterious information about the big race now so soon to be run.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GOLD CUP.

MRS. ENDERBY and Edith most thoroughly enjoyed their stroll through the lawn. Under Grafton's guidance they passed through

the wicket, and proceeded up the course till they were opposite the Royal Inclosure, where they feasted their eyes on the very last efforts of the crack London modistes. It is a wondrous show, that lawn on a fine Cup day, when fashion's fairest daughters ruffle it in all their bravery. It was their first experience of Ascot, remember. The two country girls were delighted with everything they saw. Grafton, it need scarcely be said, knew by sight everyone who was any one in the London world, and pointed out many celebrities to his charges. "And now," he said, as the roar of the betting-ring broke once more upon the ear, "it is getting time we went back. The numbers are up, and we shall have the horses out directly."

As they re-entered the wicket, Grafton and his companion had fallen a little behind Bessie and Mr. Millison. Suddenly Bob felt a strange flutter on the little hand within his arm. He turned quickly to see what was the matter. Miss Molecombe's face was very pale, and her eyes were looking into infinite space with that far-away look which we all assume when determined not to see any one.

Just in front of them stood Mr. Richard Madingley, busily vociferating—

"The Gold Cup I'll take odds upon."

He was well-dressed enough, but there could be no mistaking what his vocation was even by one so little versed in race-courses as Edith Molecombe. He was busy taking money, and giving in exchange tickets which he took from the bag slung across his shoulder. Grafton would have led his charge away, but ere he could do so Madingley had caught sight of them, and, though Edith was most certainly not looking at him, the unabashed scamp, with a smile, deliberately raised his hat to her. As Grafton told Maurice afterwards, he never felt more inclined to try his hand at physical force; but, although aware that this man's salutation was a positive insult to Miss Molecombe, there was of course nothing to be done; to have resented it would have only made a scandal, in which Edith's name would have been bandied about.

Grafton, having seen Miss Molecombe safe to the box, at once disappeared to see what was doing in the betting-ring. On his way thither he ran across Maurice, who eagerly asked him what he thought of the Cup.

"Well, I don't know much what to think of it. How are they betting?"

"There are only two backed in earnest. They take even money about the Viking, and there's a large party who are backing old Bellona."

"Ah! I can quite understand that," observed Grafton. "They know the old mare can go the course, and it's yet to be seen whether the young one can stay." And with that Grafton disap-

peared into the inner inclosure. Almost immediately afterwards Maurice's attention was arrested by the voice of Dick Madingley. He was talking to one or two of his brethren, and apparently perfectly unaware that Maurice was in his vicinity.

"No, don't tell me," he was exclaiming in much the same arrogant way he had been wont to assert his opinion at the Tunnleton Club, "this Viking won't win. Old Bellona will gallop him to a standstill. The swells will get another spill, you see if they don't. I have it pretty straight from the stable. They very much doubt whether their horse can stay, but they hope it will be a slow run race, and then they know that they can cut the old mare down for speed. But the Bellona people are quite as wide-awake as their neighbours, and they mean the race to be run right through."

The little group seemed much impressed with Mr. Madingley's views, and they all agreed that to take three to one about Bellona, under the circumstances on this information was about as good a chance of making money as often fell to men, and then apparently separated to take advantage of it.

Maurice was strangely impressed with this conversation. It coincided in some measure with Grafton's idea of the race, and moreover it offered the great chance to recoup himself for which he so anxiously looked. His mind was made up quickly; he would wait no longer, but take Hampton's fifteen hundred to five hundred if he could get it.

Verily, General Shrewster was right. The gambler's instinct was strong within Maurice.

Hampton hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "All right, Mr. Enderby, three monkeys to one Bellona;" and, that little bit of business satisfactorily concluded, Maurice thought he would go back to the box and see the race. There he was not a little surprised to find that Grafton had changed his opinion and backed the favourite, both for himself and his fair clients.

"You told me you fancied the mare for the race," said Maurice.

"So I did," replied Grafton; "but when I got inside there I found all the best judges were going for the Viking, and they assured me there wasn't the slightest doubt about his staying."

Well, these are the sort of rumours that backers of horses are usually destined to hear till the race is run. Up to the very last moment there is always somebody to presage disaster to the steed that carries your investment. Some *gobe-mouche* invariably encounters you with tales detrimental to that luckless horse's welfare. He may be right, he may be wrong, but his actual knowledge is certainly no more than that of the policeman who keeps the wicket; and I once saw that official gravely consulted on the subject of the Gold Cup by an unmistakable West-end cockney.

There was no delay at the starting-post on this occasion. The

half-dozen runners were dispatched almost immediately, and the race itself was as tame a struggle for the Cup as ever was seen, and may be told in two lines. Bellona made running till they were in the Swinley Bottom, when Viking took up the running and galloped home an easy winner by twenty lengths, to the great delight of Mrs. Enderby and Edith. The irony of fate is common enough on our leading race-courses. Wives and daughters rejoice over the gloves and bon-bons they have won, knowing little what the triumph has cost their husbands and brothers. The fickle goddess is capricious, and is wont to deal better with our feminine belongings than she does with ourselves.

Maurice laughed gaily as he congratulated his wife and the rest on their success, and in answer to Grafton's inquiries as to what he had won himself, replied, "I was not so lucky as you all seem to have been ; my investment, sad to say, was on Bellona," and then Maurice abruptly left the box.

This last defeat was a crushing blow. He knew now that he was getting near the end of his resources, and felt that he had hardly capital enough remaining with which to take advantage of a turn in the tide, even if it should come. It had not occurred to him that the conversation he had overheard had been got up expressly for his benefit ; and, only that Madingley, afraid of risking this chance of wreaking his vengeance, sternly discountenanced it, one of his companions upon that occasion would have endeavoured to lay Maurice the odds against Bellona, which mare the confederates believed really to have no sort of chance with the favourite.

But Dick Madingley's malice would have hardly been gratified without his making Maurice aware that he had been the victim of a little conspiracy. One of his associates had dogged Enderby until he had heard him make that big bet with Hampton in accordance with the false information he had been allowed to overhear. The confederate quickly reported the fact to his principal, and it was with much chuckling Madingley and his companions saw the race terminate just as they had anticipated.

"Come along," said Dick in such jubilant tones as a man may use who has won his money and worsted his enemy ; for although Dick had fielded in the first instance he had turned round and backed the favourite to finish with. "Come along," he said, "I want to give the parson another chance ; he benefited so much by listening to gentlemen's private conversation last time that he is safe to be keen to be in our little secrets again," and Mr. Madingley favoured his friends with a wink and grimace.

"Yes," rejoined Mr. Pick, "it was a very neat little plant, but it is a thousand pities we couldn't have collared that five hundred instead of Hampton, it would have been so much more finished like."

The confederates had not to go far before they saw Maurice,

smoking a meditative cigar and thinking over what he had best do next. With another wink at his companions Dick took up his position within earshot of, but with his back towards, Maurice. They clustered round him like bonnets round a card-sharper, and then Mr. Madingley commenced his narration.

"I'll just tell you how it was, you never saw such a game. There's a fellow here whom I've vowed to pay out for an ugly trick he served me in the country not long since. He's as innocent as a baby when he gets on a race-course, and I saw him going about with his ears cocked listening here and listening there, and seeing what he could make of it all. When he had put it all together I knew he looked upon it that I was a tidy judge of racing, and it suddenly occurred to me to put him on a 'wrong 'un' for the Cup. I let him hear a valuable piece of information, and am blest if the sagacious cuss didn't trot off and back it for a monkey."

An ostentatiously loud guffaw followed the conclusion of Dick's narrative. It was not that his listeners were really amused, it was more like the conspirators' chorus in "*Madame Angot*," a necessary *fanfaronade* for the proper rendering of the plot. Maurice had heard every word, and knew that he was intended to hear it, and could have grovelled on the lawn at his own foolishness. Was it likely that any information ostentatiously dropped by such men as Dick Madingley could have any other object than to delude the bystanders? Was it likely that Madingley would drop a hint for his benefit? Of course not; but that he would gladly be the cause of his losing a lot of money was easy of comprehension. He had thirsted himself to strike Dick to the ground at Tunnleton, and was it to be supposed that Dick's feelings towards him had not been of similar nature? He had read of the salting of gold and diamond mines, and saw now, idiot that he was, how possible it was to salt gold mines on the turf. If there was one man at Ascot whose ill-will he had good cause to dread it was Richard Madingley, and he had been insane enough to follow his advice on a big race.

"Fool! fool! thrice sodden fool!" he muttered. "The veriest child would have mistrusted one who had always been his avowed enemy, and I must actually put faith in him. I start on a system and neglect to follow it. I put my own judgment of racing against Grafton's, who has been following it the last ten years. No wonder I have come to grief. To finish with," he continued grimly, "I happen to have thrown in for the worst meeting backers have had this year. Well, I've gone too far to give in now. It may as well be a little worse as left where it is. Luck must change, one cannot always go on backing losers."

It is to be hoped not, still the sad fact remains that one may do so for a very considerable time. There is nothing in this life in which luck does not form an ingredient.

Bob Grafton, lounging through the lawn where he smoked his

after-luncheon cigar, suddenly ran across Mr. Hampton. "Well, we got the best of you that last time, but you and your brethren are having a rare meeting."

"Well, yes, Mr. Grafton, we are; as poor Ned Caley used to say, I am almost tired of winning money. I beg pardon, Mr. Grafton, there's a gentleman you introduced me to, who I think you should give a hint to. Mr. Enderby is having an awful time."

"But he's not betting high, surely?" exclaimed Grafton.

"Well, sir," replied Hampton, "of course I don't know anything about his income or resources, nor do I know what other bets he may be making, but he must be getting on towards a couple of thousand to the bad in my ledger."

"I had no idea he was betting like that," replied Grafton quietly. "He don't usually speculate so heavily, but he's good enough, if that's what you mean."

"No, Mr. Grafton, I didn't quite mean that. I only mean that he's backing his bad luck right out. I've seen a meeting or two like this before, and I can only say if I was a backer I should turn it up and go back to London."

As Grafton walked away he reflected rather seriously over what the bookmaker had told him; he had no doubt that Hampton's story was correct, and that Maurice, carried away by the excitement of what might be called his first race-meeting, had staked heavy sums again and again. He knew perfectly well what this was to the Enderbys. It meant sweeping away all these winnings of the "Wandering Nun," even if they sufficed to pay Maurice's liabilities. He thought rather ruefully that it was he who had been at the bottom of this Ascot excursion. However, there was no more to be said, but it made Grafton somewhat grave for the remainder of the afternoon.

They were a somewhat sombre carriage-full on their way back to town. First and foremost they were all tired, and in the crowd of the Cup day had a considerable difficulty in getting away from Ascot station, two trains leaving before they succeeded in obtaining the accommodation they required; and those who have experienced that wait at the station after a fatiguing and unsuccessful day will quite understand that there was not much life or conversation in the party on the way home—in short, most of them, I think, slept more or less, and if Maurice did not he was at all events chewing the bitter cud of his own thoughts.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE NEWS OF ISANDELWANA.

ASCOT is over: there is nothing left but to pay the bill, and Maurice sits gloomily this Saturday morning, pondering over the pages of his betting-book. It is no use hoping for a mistake in the figures, he has gone over it at least a dozen times, trying

to cheat himself with the idea that he has added it up wrongly; but no, the figures are inexorable, his losses are larger than he had fancied them. Even if he drains his banking account to the last shilling it will not suffice to discharge his Ascot liabilities. He does not quite know what to do; he must go and consult Grafton about it; indeed, he would have to do that in any case, as it was through him that he usually settled with Hampton. He did not quite relish the confession he had got to make to his friend. It is difficult to mask ill-tidings from those who love us and are accustomed to note every change of our face—and, to add to his perplexities, Bessie saw something had gone wrong with him, and, though she was very far from guessing the whole truth, it did not require much penetration on her part to suspect that he had lost more money during the week than was justifiable.

However, having calmed her apprehensions as well as he could, he started forth for Grafton's chambers in Half Moon Street, and found that gentleman at breakfast, although it was past noon.

"Come in," he said, "and sit down; I always take it out after a hard week's racing, especially when it has been such a week of disaster as this has. I've a philosopher amongst my acquaintance who always takes to his bed when he is hard hit; as he says, it is the most economical thing you can do. You don't spend money, and are hedging any amount of sleep for livelier times."

All the time Bob rattled on he was watching his companion's face keenly—as he rightly guessed, he was about to listen to a discussion of ways and means. He had listened to so many from all sorts of people that he was quick at reading the signs of the storm-beaten. Indeed, he enjoyed quite a reputation in this way. Clearheaded and fertile in resource, it was quite a common saying amongst his own set, "Go to Bob Grafton, he'll pull you through if anybody can."

"I want to consult you, Bob," said Maurice, as he took a chair.

"I know," interrupted Grafton; "you got hit deuced hard at Ascot. I'd no idea you were betting heavily, or else I should have told you not to be such a fool as to do it. However, it's no use talking about that now; the question is, what does the scrape come to?"

"Twenty-four eighty," replied Maurice, as he handed his memorandum book to his host.

"Well, you've joined the plunging school with a vengeance," rejoined Grafton. "I heard something of this accidentally at Ascot. The names of the heavy losers generally ooze out in the ring, and I suppose you attracted attention as a new hand. But I'd no idea that it was so bad as this. Well, it's no use going over it all, you've no doubt totted it up correctly. How it was lost is of no consequence—that it has got to be paid at once—is. What are the assets?"

"About five hundred short of that amount if I draw out my last shilling."

"Well, you can't quite do that, you must have some ready money to carry on with. Hampton, I see, is your main creditor. You must let me have as much as you can spare on Monday morning. I'll pay off the few minor creditors, I will give Hampton all there is left on account, and ask him to give you time for the remainder."

"Yes," said Maurice gloomily, "I know all that can be done, but the worst of it is, I don't see what time is to do for me."

"I do," rejoined Grafton; "and, if you'll promise me solemnly not to go plunging any more, I can give you a gleam of comfort in that direction. Remember, the 'Wandering Nun' was all amiss at Epsom, and she hadn't got over it at Ascot, but I can tell you what I saw there, some of the cleverest men on the turf were backing her quite quietly for the Leger. Now, you stand to win quite enough upon her without backing her. Half the Leger Stakes will satisfy Hampton and put your banking account in a very satisfactory position—should it happen to come off."

"Let me only get out of the trouble that way, and I will give my word never to go racing again. I can't trust myself, Bob; it's intoxication, infatuation, what you will; but I couldn't look on at it without betting."

"No, I understand you now," replied Grafton, "and deeply regret I ever persuaded you to accompany me to a race-course. I've met your sort before, nothing but total abstinence is of any use to you; and I tell you what, old man, the sooner you get something to do—to work your superfluous steam off at, the better. You're certain to come to grief if you stop idling about town."

Talk about marking out our own career, how very little we often have to say to it. Men who have started for the bar have become eminent dramatists; men who have started for the navy have become famous judges; while warriors like Cromwell and Clive were not bred to arms. Had it not been for Uncle John's wedding present, Maurice Enderby might have blossomed into a respectable clergyman; as it is, wherever his future may lie, he will never attain celebrity in this wise. Yet Maurice's pen was getting recognized amongst the guild of literature as that of a bright, lively writer with considerable power of satire, one who handled the topics of the day in light, masterly, and, above all, readable fashion. It might not be very lucrative employment as yet, but he had at all events established a market for his wares.

Now another person whose character had been somewhat altered by Ascot was Miss Molecombe. She had been, previously to her affair with Dick Madingley, a quiet conventional young lady; but these latter events had imparted a certain amount of dash and possession to her manner which it had not possessed before. She had been pretty well cured of her passion for Dick Madingley before going to stay with the Millisons. No girl who had dared so much for a lover could have stood the cool, premeditated neglect that followed the *fiasco* of her attempted elopement. She had

stood up for him for some time, but her womanly pride had been cut to the quick, and it must have been indeed a very clear explanation which would restore him to her good graces. At Ascot she saw him in his true colours, and the very salt was sown over her dead love with a vengeance; but strange to say she returned to Tunnleton with a great admiration for Maurice Enderby. He had been so loyal and true to her, and above all, the very iniquities now charged against him rather glorified him in her eyes. That Mr. Enderby had withdrawn from the Church, and had lost a very large sum of money at Ascot, was no secret whatever in Tunnleton. The latter, Dick Madingley had taken care should reach that town, where he hoped it might do Maurice considerable harm. He was not aware that Enderby had severed all connection with it, but the blackening of Maurice's character was a thing to which he was ready to devote himself ungrudgingly. But Miss Molecombe looked back upon Maurice's misdeeds, when they came to her knowledge, with a species of reverence. We all understand it. The petty sinners regard the great ones with a quiet awe. And the mild gamblers of the race-course revere the magnates of the turf, whose chief claim to celebrity lies in the fact that they bet in thousands, instead of wagering the more modest stakes of their fellows. Even mere boys who have lost some thousands in anticipation of their patrimony are looked at with morbid interest, and yet if there is one thing within every one's accomplishment it is the losing of money.

When General Shrewster heard the Ascot story he wrote a few sensible lines to Maurice, in which, while regretting that his warning had been so quickly found too prophetic, he repeated Bob Grafton's advice of "total abstinence," and further added, "There is trouble arising in South Africa, and you should hold yourself in readiness to take advantage of the earliest opportunity of volunteering that may arise. Count upon me to back you in this. Now, to help yourself. I have heard that you wield a smartish pen of your own. Can't you get an appointment from one of the daily papers, should these rumours turn out true? It would be no detriment to you as an extra aid, remember, to be in possession of the ear of a prominent daily. Take my advice, and look after the second string at once, and, if you can't speak whatever the lingo of those parts may be, well, pretend you can."

Maurice was thunderstruck as he finished this letter. Mr. Greville, in his *Memoirs*, recalls how Epsom and Newmarket utterly absorbs a man, and Maurice had forgotten for some days to take note of anything in the papers that did not bear upon the pursuit uppermost in his thoughts, but though he heeded them not, and the Government also troubled their heads but little about it, there were signs of stormy times on the Cape frontier. We were acting with our usual contempt for our neighbours, arrogantly sending a corporal's guard to put down a simmering insurrection which required a division to intimidate it.

It is our way, I suppose. We are so impressed with the manner in which a handful of policemen cow a London mob, that we believe a like handful of soldiers will suffice to strike terror into the hearts of our savage neighbours. We are astonished to find that, much as well-trained soldiers can effect by science and superior weapons, yet, when the foe, exulting in his numbers, has, reckless of loss, fought his way in to a hand-to-hand struggle, the barbarian's sinews are tougher than those of our own men. Overweening confidence and insufficient numbers have been the cause of more than one disaster to our arms, and first successes give courage to the enemy.

Here and there an old military man, who knew the country, shook his head, and prophesied that if Government did not stamp this little agitation out promptly they would find themselves involved in an awkward war before many weeks were over.

The croakers were right—these prophets of ill omen are at times—and when the cable flashed the news that a British regiment had been annihilated, the nation was one in demanding that the Zulu king should be at once brought to his knees. A mere question of time and troops, no doubt, but meanwhile those with a stomach for fighting were like to get their fill of it.

The story of the all but annihilation of the twenty-fourth, and heroic defence of Rorke's Drift, had not yet reached England, when General Shrewster wrote, but it followed pretty quickly on the heels of his letter, and Maurice saw now that the chance had come to him. As General Shrewster had foreseen, brigadiers, staff-officers, and newspaper correspondents, were all on the wing, and tumbling over each other in their anxiety to procure employment of some sort beyond the Tugela.*

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LEAGUER.

If England had been startled and Europe amazed at the terrible intelligence that the cable had flashed from South Africa, it was nothing to the dismay that spread through the country itself. In Natal the news of the disaster produced a positive panic. It was rumoured that the Zulu army, flushed with victory, had crossed the Tugela and were in a fair way to overrun the province. Paris and Berlin, as well as London, were aghast at the catastrophe. Even in civilized warfare it is rare to hear of the annihilation of a regiment, and, singular to relate, it was the same regiment that some thirty odd years before had died grimly fighting almost to a man in India, on the fatal field of Chillianwallah. That the scare

* There is some little discrepancy in the time of the disaster of Isandhlwana, and history has had to bend here to the exigencies of fiction. I can only

"Fairly acknowledge I

At school or college I

Never was very precise in chronology."

should be pretty general through the provinces bordering on Zululand was excusable, considering that even the military leaders took a most gloomy view of the situation, and at once abandoned the initiative for the defensive.

Had the Zulus of that time been led by one of those wild military enthusiasts who seem born to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm, they would have swept like a torrent across the Tugela, annihilating convoy after convoy in their triumphant march, but, according to the manner of barbarians, their first impulse, after striking a great blow, was to return home in triumph with their plunder. Our own Highlanders in the last century had a good deal of this feeling, and, though easy to gather for one supreme effort, were difficult to hold together for a continuous campaign.

Colonel Pearson, advancing into Zululand at the head of a long straggling convoy, had arrived as far as Etshowe, when he received news of the catastrophe of Isandhlwana, with orders to entrench himself where he was and to be prepared to bear the attack of the whole Zulu army. This the column did without loss of time, and for about a month was known to the outer world no more.

The first streaks of dawn were just visible in the heavens; the advanced sentries drop slowly in and report that all is quiet as far as they can ascertain, but every one knows that Etshowe is surrounded by a numerous and subtle foe; they have had too many proofs of late both of the numbers and cunning of their enemies not to be strictly on the alert; creeping up noiselessly through the night again and again, the Zulus had become only visible at the last moment, when, with a savage yell, they made a determined attempt to rush the entrenchments, but so far they had been invariably repulsed with heavy loss. As the sun tops the horizon and lights up the big rolling prairie, clothed for the most part in long grass, dotted here and there with mealie fields, one recognizes how easy it is for the savage foe to conceal his numbers, and, in the hours of darkness, steal up to the attack; but there are keen eyes and stout hearts behind those breastworks, and, as long as the cartridges and food hold out, there is little fear of the Zulus ever getting inside.

A tall, bearded man, clad in semi-military costume, stands resting his elbows on the parapet and eagerly scans the country through a field-glass, but apparently without discovering anything worthy of his attention. As he puts down his glass a quiet voice by his side observes—

“Another night of tranquillity, Mr. Enderby?”

“Yes, sir,” replies Maurice, as he turned and touched his cap to the veteran chief who stood beside him; “you don’t suppose they will raise the siege, do you?”

“Not a bit of it,” replied the colonel; “I’ve had much experience on the frontiers, and the Zulus, like all barbarians, are full of tricks and stratagems. They are only trying to lull us into fancied

security. I wish we could hear something from the outside; we know less of what is going on than they do in London."

"And know, I should think, sir," replied Maurice, laughing, "more about the Zulu army than most people."

"Ah," replied the chief, "we can't tell how much of that army we have got around us; except in small bodies we never catch much sight of them by day, and in the night attacks it is difficult to judge of their numbers. By the way, Shrewster, in his letter to me, told me your object in volunteering, and I've seen quite enough of you here to know that you have the makings of a good soldier. Now I can't say for certain, but the probability is in two or three days I shall want a volunteer on a very delicate mission; I don't disguise from you it's a risky one, but if you pull through all right it will count as a special bit of service, and strengthen your claim considerably for a commission."

"It's only too kind of you to give me the chance," replied Maurice; "I can only promise when the time comes to do my level best."

"That'll do," said the chief; "only don't forget a cool head is the first essential in difficulties," and, with a slight nod, he walked away into the interior of the fort, leaving Maurice to wonder what his special mission might prove.

It was rather a grim consultation at which the chief had next to preside. He had to point out to his second and third in command that their stock of provisions was getting low, and that, though he had no doubt they could hold Etshowe for months had they food, yet their ability to do so was now simply dependent on that fact.

"I don't like to do it, but I am afraid I shall be compelled to put the force upon half-rations. It is a sad necessity, for the men are hard-worked; you can't expect to get that out of either man or horse unless they are well fed."

"No," replied one of the other officers; "moreover there is a good deal of sickness amongst both officers and men. They don't give in, but stick to their work pluckily enough, still they are not likely to improve upon half-rations."

"No," rejoined the chief, "but there is no sign of any relief for us as yet, and we do know that four weeks at the present issue of food will bring us about to the end of our stock."

"That's true," replied the other, "and, even when we get an intimation that succour is on its way to us, it may be still some time before it arrives."

"Quite so," said the chief, "and as it is clearly our business to hold out till the last I shall put the garrison on half-rations from to-morrow. It looks as if the massacre of Isandhlwana had been by no means the measure of our disasters. The commander-in-chief would have surely contrived to communicate with us before this if there had not been further trouble."

Maurice's first experience of active service had been by no means

cheering. The march up to Etshowe had been all very well ; riding through a strange country in which they might hourly expect to be attacked had a wild excitement about it which sent the blood coursing through the veins and made the pulses tingle, but this being cooped up, like a rat in a corner, the dull and depressing routine of siege life, is about the hardest trial that a soldier has to endure, followed as it usually is by all the privations of insufficient food et cetera. As for fighting, the Zulus, to do them justice, took care they should have plenty of that. Maurice, like all his comrades, knew that they were fighting for their very lives. Their fierce foes had already shown them how they construed " washing their spears," and every one in Etshowe knew that if the place was taken the Zulus would spare no one within its ramparts. Men die hard when fighting for their lives, and so far the Zulus had found Etshowe a stubborn nut to crack. But they knew as well as its beleaguered defenders that there was a limit to their provisions, and waited patiently till the time should come when the garrison would have to choose between surrender or that last expedient of the desperate, an attempt to cut their way through.

About two days after the order for half-rations had been given out some of the soldiers were suddenly struck with some singular flashes that illumined the sky in the direction of the lower Tugela, and no sooner was this fact communicated to their officers than the entire garrison crowded out to see what could be made of it. The officers welcomed it with a great sense of relief. It was apparent to them that their own people were striving to communicate with them by means of the heliograph. It is true that so far they were unable to interpret the signals, but one thing was clear, assistance was approaching, and that one fact did more to raise the spirits of the gallant little band than even luxury in the shape of rations could have done. There is something terribly depressing in utter isolation to most of us, but nothing perhaps tries the soldier more heavily when besieged than complete ignorance of what his friends on the outside may be doing on his behalf. The leaguered force at once attempted to reply in similar fashion, but the afternoon wore away without their being able to interpret the signals. This, however, was clear: that friends were signalling to them, and evidently recognized their flashes in response. Whether they were understood any better than they understood the heliographs of the relieving column they were of course unable to judge, but that assistance was close at hand was beyond all doubt. The next day was a repetition of the abortive signalling, and still, much to his disgust, the commandant found himself in ignorance of what the advancing column was trying to say to him. As far as they could judge by the flashes, the signallers were stationary, and had not moved since yesterday; they were some twenty miles off, apparently, but that was rather a matter of guess-work. The commandant was much exercised in his mind on this point. Was

the relieving force held in check by the Zulus, and were they inviting him to co-operate in a grand attack? Was this the meaning of the quiet of the last two or three days: had the Zulus withdrawn from around Etshowe with a view to giving battle to the relieving force? If so they were probably lying more or less masked on the road leading to the fort. It was, he thought, imperative that he should communicate with the leader of the advancing column. He must send a messenger—a dangerous errand no doubt, still a resolute, well-mounted man might get through, carrying with him such explanations as would make all signalling easy for the future, and who would also be able to speak as to the exact state of things in Etshowe. He had been prepared to do this before when without the knowledge that assistance was so near at hand, and it seemed to him still more necessary to send that messenger now. His mind was soon made up, and then he sent for Maurice.

Briefly he explained what he wanted.

"It's not a nice ride for you, Enderby, and you'll want both sabre and revolver ready to your hand, but I think if you keep your head cool you'll pull through. A good deal depends upon your horse, and you've my authority to take your choice of any one in the fort."

"Thank you, sir, but I think my own horse looks as well as any of them; he's got a bit of blood about him that'll serve me well if it comes to a pinch. I had plenty of opportunities of trying him on the way up, and know he'll do his best in case of need."

"Good! You'd better start just before daybreak. I will have the road patrolled so as to ensure you a clear start. My impression is that you will see no Zulus till you get some miles from here."

"You don't think they have withdrawn from around Etshowe?" inquired Maurice.

"In the main yes. They've left part of their army here to watch us, but the bulk of it is withdrawn to give battle to the force coming up to relieve us, and it is as you near that you will run the greatest danger. You had better spend the afternoon concerting a simple code of flashes with Chamberlain; he seems to understand heliograph better than any one else, and to thoroughly establish communication is, of course, the chief object."

And with a quiet nod the commandant dismissed Enderby for the present.

As for Maurice, he left the room in search of Chamberlain as gay as a lark. A somewhat hazardous piece of service it might be, but it may be doubted whether there was an officer in the garrison who would not have been delighted to change places with him. In war men are called upon to risk their lives day by day, to die with their face to the foe, with the brief epitaph that they have done their duty, or if fortunate enough to escape shot and steel to be rewarded with the homely but pithy observation "that it was all in the day's work;" but here was a chance. The man who carried out this mission successfully would be sure of praise,

and had a fair promise of being mentioned in the despatches. Maurice knew well that in most callings the man who can carry a still tongue is wont to be most trusted by his superiors. To no one of his comrades did he confide his forthcoming departure save Chamberlain. That officer it was necessary to acquaint with the orders he had received, to explain the urgent need of his being instructed in heliography to the extent that time would allow; and before sundown he had mastered sufficient of the science of flashes to feel certain that to the extent of a simple code communication would be established between Etshowe and the relieving force, should he only succeed in reaching it. That done, he jealously superintended the doing-up of his horse, and then, having finished his own supper, threw himself on his pallet to snatch a few hours' rest before starting on his perilous ride.

CHAPTER XL.

A PERILOUS RIDE.

It wanted considerably over an hour to daybreak when Maurice was aroused from his slumbers and told that the chief was awaiting him. A toilet is a brief and hasty ceremony at such times, and a very few minutes elapsed before he followed the orderly across the open space to that wing of the mission-house which served as the commandant's quarters.

"I have nothing much more to say to you," said the veteran, as he acknowledged Maurice's salute, "than to wish you God-speed and shake hands. You will tell how it is with us here to whoever commands the relieving column. Say we can last on the half-ration for three weeks yet, and that they will never turn us out of the fort except by starvation. Take an old hand's advice—spare your horse on the early part of your road so as to keep all the powder you can in him for the time when you will have to trust to his heels. Let the first flash you can send us announce your own safety. The picket report that they can get no touch of the enemy as far as they have been along the road; and now God bless you and send you safe through; the sooner you are in the saddle the better," and as he concluded the veteran extended his hand and exchanged a hearty hand-grip with Maurice.

Enderby's final preparations were soon concluded. Some two or three hours would either bring him to his destination or see him in the hands of the Zulus if alive. There was no necessity, therefore, for carrying food with him, and it was best, he thought, to travel as light as possible. He confided a letter to Chamberlain to be forwarded to his wife in the event of the worst happening to him, and then, having looked carefully to girth and bridle, swung himself into the saddle, and made his way quietly to the gate. A quiet "good luck" from the officer commanding there, and then Maurice found himself without the entrenchments and fairly

started on his errand. He jogged gently along at starting, peering into the darkness on every side, for it was now that blackest hour of the night which heralds the dawn, which from late experience he knew was a favourite time with the Zulus for commencing their attack. He would have been troubled to have increased his speed much at present, for it was just as much as he could do to make out the track, which even in broad daylight was by no means very well defined. More than once he turned in his saddle and checked his horse, while he looked back to see if there was any stir at Etshowe, but no—all was still. He had been travelling now as far as he could guess for about an hour, and though the fort was long lost to sight, yet his ear must have caught the sharp rattle of musketry and the fierce yells of the foe had there been any attack upon it.

He hailed the first streaks of dawn with no little satisfaction. If the Zulus were more likely to catch sight of him by daylight, he, on the other hand, was more likely to blunder into their midst in the darkness. Then, again, with light it would be possible to travel considerably faster. As far as he could guess he was now some four miles from the fort, and he hoped had traversed a fourth or so of his journey. And now the sun peeps above the horizon; the stars have faded away; a few minutes more and another day has begun. Maurice pulls up his horse, and gazing around takes stock of the situation. He can see Etshowe behind him, and in the clear morning air can almost make out the sentries on its ramparts; but with that exception there is not a sign of a human being. He can see the track plainly enough now, and just at present it seems to be pretty fair going. Putting his horse into a hand-canter, he rides gaily forward, and is half inclined to already deem the dangers of his expedition overrated. Still, he had seen too much of the cunning of the Zulus to relax his vigilance, and knows that as yet he has not come to where, in the opinion of his chief, he might expect to be waylaid by the enemy. He has got over another three miles in easy fashion, and is approaching a place where the road bends considerably to the right. Round that bend he thinks it quite possible he may catch sight of the distant laager of the relieving column. Suddenly he fancies he sees a black head appear for a second above the crop in a mealie field to the right. It disappears almost instantaneously, but another minute convinces him he was not mistaken, as in half-a-dozen places the dark heads appear for an instant above the crest of the corn, and then as suddenly vanish. Yes, he has come upon the enemy now, and then it flashes across him what is happening. The Zulus have caught sight of him, and are hurrying under cover of the mealies to intercept him just beyond the bend. He knows now that the crisis has arrived, and that Bay Robin will be called upon to gallop in real earnest.

He shakes up his horse; and, as Bay Robin settles down to his

stride, Maurice thanks Heaven that he has a stretch of fair galloping ground in front of him. A yell bursts from the throats of the Zulus as Maurice's quickened pace tells them they are discovered. Throwing off all further attempt at concealment, they come trooping in irregular order through the mealies as fast as they can. But if the corn had afforded them cover in the first instance, and so nearly compassed Maurice's destruction, it stood to him now. It hindered his foes from progressing as fast as they otherwise would; the fleet-footed Zulus could not utilize their speed as they might have done in the open ground, and Maurice saw, with a gleam of exultation, that, with the exception of some half-dozen of the foremost, he should easily outstrip the remainder. These were straining every nerve to intercept him just below the bend. Should they fail to arrest him there, Bay Robin would speedily bear him beyond their reach.

"There'll be a tussle for it, my horse," muttered Maurice, as he bent forward in the saddle and patted the animal's neck; "we're tailing them off nicely, but they haven't near so far to go as we have, and those leading fellows will be in time to throw their assegais at us. We must chance it, and take very good care that, if their assegais don't hit us the first time, they have no chance to throw a second."

It turned out even better than Maurice had anticipated. He is round the bend, and then it becomes evident that he will have to deal with no more than three of his enemies. Two of them emerged from the mealie field and gained the edge of the track just as Enderby comes well round the bend. They are still some hundred and fifty yards from him, while the third man has not as yet emerged from the corn. Drawing his sabre, and setting spurs to his horse, with a wild cheer Maurice dashes straight at them. Breathless with their long run, the two Zulus are not as accurate as usual in their aim. A couple of assegais whizz harmlessly past the horseman. One of the two, a big powerful fellow, makes a desperate snatch at Bay Robin's bridle, only to go down before a swashing sabre-cut that lays his right cheek open in grizzly fashion.

"'But sabres shall swing,
And head-pieces ring,
When the gallants of England
Are up for their King,'"

muttered Maurice with a grim laugh in all the intoxication of battle, as he and Bay Robin sped merrily onwards. Forward—away—onward, onward, the best part of a mile is past before Maurice drew bridle, then the broken ground dictated a slackening of speed. Sheathing his sabre he looked back and saw that the Zulus were gathered round the fallen man, still brandishing their spears at him, but they had evidently abandoned all idea of pursuit. Once more he laughed in his beard, but still pricked on as quickly as he could conveniently go over the uneven track. Once

more he comes to a stretch of smoother ground, and again presses his horse to a hand-gallop. Bay Robin is barely in his stride when he swerves across the track so suddenly that a less practised horseman than Maurice would very likely have been unseated. It was well the gallant brute had done so, for half-a-dozen assegais whizzed past his rider that would in all probability have taken effect had it not been for Bay Robin's being startled by the gleam of the spears in the long grass to his right. As it is, from some cause or other, the horse nearly blunders on his knees, and half-a-dozen Zulus rush forward to seize their victim. Quick as thought Maurice draws his revolver from the holster. Crack! crack! and the two nearest bite the dust. Bay Robin recovers himself by a supreme effort, and gallops on with unabated vigour, but it is not for long. Another half-mile and his rider feels the gallant horse faltering in his stride. He turns an anxious glance back, but his foes, singularly enough, have already vanished. He pulls Bay Robin together, but feels that he is dying away under his hand. What has come to him? He lurches in his gallop, and as Maurice pulls him up is beginning to sprawl after the fashion of a drunken man. His rider has barely time to jump from his back ere the honest brute pitches heavily forward, and then rolls over on his side. It is clear enough now, the cruel assegai is quivering in his flank, and Maurice knows that his charger's last course is run.

He looks round. Small chance of his escape now, he thinks. His foes can be but a few hundred yards behind him, and as soon as they see he is dismounted, there is little likelihood but what they will start in hot pursuit; although he can see nothing of them he has small doubt but that they are watching his movements. Singular, he thinks, that a fierce yell of triumph did not burst from their throats as they witnessed the fall of his horse. He drew the revolver from his holster, loosened his sabre in its sheath, and made up his mind to sell his life dearly. That they would be on him before many minutes he looked upon as certain; and then he cast a despairing look along the track in front of him. Ah! could it be possible? Yes, he felt sure of it—a long way off yet, but there was a laager straight ahead. Could he gain it? and Maurice strode manfully forward.

Every moment he expected to hear the whizz of an assegai; but no; he trudged along a good mile and still his foes made no sign. Again and again he looked back but could see nothing of them, and at last the truth dawned upon him: the Zulus were ambushed with a view to attacking the relieving column as soon as it was once more on its march; they were afraid to follow him further for fear of discovering themselves. Maurice's spirits arose; let him gain the laager and the information he brought with him was of the highest value, not only to those whom he had left but to those he would join.

He had not trudged far before he espied a small party of horse-

men riding leisurely towards him ; it was evident, moreover, that they had already caught sight of him ; although some distance off he felt pretty sure that these were friends. Another minute and two of them, detaching themselves from the group, came galloping towards him. The foremost was an officer, and, as he reined up his horse close to Maurice, he exclaimed—

“Who are you and where do you come from?”

“I am a messenger from Etshowe,” replied Maurice, “and the bearer of important news for your general.”

“When did you leave the fort?”

“A little before daybreak.”

“They were all right then?” asked the officer eagerly.

“Yes, and quite able to hold out for some time yet.”

“Ah, we’ve been trying to communicate with you for the last two or three days, but our people can’t understand your flashes. You haven’t come on your feet, surely?”

“No, I left a good horse on the road about three miles back. It was a squeak and I had to ride for it. I pulled through, but they killed my horse, and a right good one he was, too.”

“Ah, you came through the Zulus?” said the dragoon; “I suppose they lie pretty thick between us and the fort?”

“Yes,” laughed Maurice as he tramped onwards by the side of his companion’s horse; “you will find them thick as thieves some few miles ahead.”

“Well,” replied the other, “the general will be glad to see you; he is very anxious, I know, to get news from Etshowe. It was a great relief to us all to get those answering flashes on the heliograph; we couldn’t make out what you said but they showed you were all right, and we’re within a long day’s march of the fort now. We are advancing rather slowly because we expect to come in contact with the enemy every hour. Now if you will follow with my orderly I’ll gallop back to camp and report that you are on your way to the general. You’ve a good three miles before you yet, but I’ll send out a horse to meet you, which will save you a bit,” and, so saying, the dragoon set spurs to his horse and galloped off with his news.

And now, as Maurice neared the laager, it was evident that all the preparations for the march had been suddenly suspended. His former acquaintance met him with a led horse.

“Jump on,” he cried; “the general wants to see you immediately. You are upsetting all the programme,” he continued laughing; “the orders are for the camp to stand fast while the rocket-troop and horse artillery go forward and search all this long grass right and left of us.”

Thus adjured Maurice swung himself into the saddle, and, guided by his new friend, found himself in less than a quarter-of-an-hour at the laager.

(To be concluded.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

THE season is over, and its distant echoes are now in memory only, unless, indeed, we count those faint and far ones that reach us from Norway, from Scotland, from Normandy and other resorts of society when it escapes from those miles upon miles of brick and stucco which some one has facetiously called "the little village." The echoes of memory are to be listened to in this instance, and to be treasured; for has not the season been that of the Jubilee year of our Queen? Have we not been reading a radiant page of history during the hot days of June and July, as we simmered and gasped in the unwonted and tropical heat? That the Queen of England is also Empress of India would seem to have been borne in mind by the weather itself in this Jubilee year. The slow-swinging punkah has been sighed for, and the siesta has become quite an institution with the weak or the lazy. A ride or drive before breakfast would have been acceptable to many of us, but Mrs. Grundy, that familiar friendly fiend of ours, who herds us all so jealously and so vigorously into the right path—Mrs. Grundy disapproves of anything out of the common. A ride at four o'clock in the morning, perfectly correct in India, would be regarded as quite an impropriety here, where the proper time for "an airing," as some old-fashioned folks still call it, is in the afternoon, when the sun is at his very brightest, and has had several hours wherein to make the atmosphere almost insupportable to man and beast, to say nothing of women and children.

The fact is, we do not understand hot weather in England. We fret and fuss and fume over it, make it the subject of constant lamentation, and never allow ourselves to forget it for a single instant. If only we could induce all our friends to enter into a compact not to mention the heat, we should keep twice as cool as when people are perpetually coming up to us gasping, or snorting, or deeply sighing, or taking all-rounders with handkerchiefs, according to idiosyncrasy. Then, again, we are a restless nation. We do not comprehend the delights of sitting still, as Orientals do. The *dolce far niente* is with us ignominiously translated by the ugly and uneasy little verb "to potter." We cannot be comfortably quiet and lymphatic, we Islanders, defying the thermometer. We are a land of shopkeepers, and treat our

minutes as merchandise. Even those of us who have leisure have lost the art of enjoying it, and, losing that, we lose more than we imagine.

Now what has the Jubilee season brought us, besides the Hessian fly? Among the novelties is the new hansom, which, when open, has a remarkable resemblance to the stocks in which evildoers were fastened long ago. The revival of the frock-coat is another outcome of a season when London was full of foreigners, with whom this garment has always been an institution. It has not been seen much in black, pale grey being the tint in which it has chosen to revisit the glimpses of the moon.

In ladies' dresses there are principally negations to record. The idiotic hump at the back, for which we were indebted to some man-milliner, has almost entirely disappeared among the well-dressed, and steels will soon be quite things of the past. What influence the hot weather has had upon this protuberance it would be hard to say, for it had already begun to dwindle before the great heat came upon us. When it did arrive, the stuffed cushion that upheld the draperies became an intolerable burden, and many persons who had previously thought it rather pretty and graceful to wear a hump like a camel, suddenly became alive to its inartistic absurdity, and reduced its dimensions to about one-third of their original proportions.

The sailor hat has reached its apotheosis during this Jubilee season. That hat is seen everywhere, on every variety of woman. It frequents the churches, where the widely different angles at which it is worn distract the devout and amuse the other contingent. It has haunted the park and the picture-galleries, and though it is really a most suitable and sensible summer headgear, its all-pervadingness causes the weary gazer to rebel against it. If only old ladies, with hardly any hair, would abstain from it, things would be better; and if girls whose mirrors tell them bitter truths would find some more becoming kind of headgear, their own state would be more gracious and the eye of the public would glare less viciously at those who dare to offend it by lacking the great gift of beauty.

The attractions of Wild West Brompton do not pall upon the Londoner; the place is as fashionable as ever on these broiling August days. Those who dine at the Welcome Club speak in terms of high appreciation of the commissariat, and realize how delightful a thing it is to eat the great meal of the day in a spot where a few paces only divide them from the soft grass and beautiful old trees of the gardens of the club. It is not every Londoner to whom it is granted to have a wide green space beside or near his home, and the cigar-lit stroll post-prandial is a pleasant thing to the prisoner of bricks and stucco. It has been, and still is, quite the correct thing to snatch a fearful joy from the vicissitudes of the switchback railway and to enjoy the fitful fever

of the toboggan slide. These sports of the Wild West promise to become a veritable institution among us.

The theatres have suffered from the intense heat of the past two months. Few people have cared to face the broiling atmosphere of an indoor entertainment while the thermometer was recording eighty-something in the shade, and actually bursting in the endeavour to do its recording duty in the sun. With the cool days of the return from *villeggiatura* will come a rush for the theatres, all anxious to see what was missed during the season. Meantime there is abundance of attraction for the inveterate playgoer, who would rather simmer in a theatre every night in the year than miss a single play or even the lights and shades thrown upon a performance by a change of cast. The musically-named "Bells of Haslemere" promise to ring out the summer and ring in another season at last. The immortal play, "Our Boys," is among the revivals, and "The Colonel" has come with it from the shadows of the past. Beautiful Mrs. Brown-Potter promises us a new play a few weeks later. When she is sufficiently mistress of her art, in which she is so rapidly improving, to carry with her on the stage the full and subtle charm that is hers in real life she will indeed astonish those critics who were so hard upon her. We are to have "Dandy Dick" again in the autumn, more accessible to most of us than when it was at the Court Theatre. Mrs. Bernard-Beere will probably again delight her audiences with her marvellous impersonation of the heroine of Mr. Phillips' novel; and "The Red Lamp" will shine once more under the careful tendance of Mr. Beerbohm Tree. These and other dramatic attractions make the return home a thing to be regarded with anticipative pleasure, delightful as is the sojourn by the sea on these burning days.

Crowded are the "pleasure resorts" of Great Britain and Normandy, and with greater zest than ever do bathers bathe, swimmers swim, and loungers lounge. The liberal allowance of moonlight we have had during this season, owing to fine and cloudless weather, must be responsible for the unusually large number of marriages that have been announced; or this epidemic of matrimony may perhaps be owing to the fact observed by every one, that there have been more pretty girls seen everywhere about this year than for many a long day. However this may be, it is certain that there is to be much marrying and giving in marriage in the autumn. The moon is the lovers' light, we are unanimously told by all the poets. The fair luminary is an inveterate match-maker; the traces of her influence will be seen in the marriage registers of this Jubilee year.

The glorious weather has perhaps had something to do with the all-prevalent good looks so very observable. Beauty has been able to go beautifully in festive robes. Pink cheeks and rosy lips look their softest and brightest when the sun is shining upon

them through the airy lacework of a sunshade ; and faces that began to grow pale and tired at the end of those busily pleasant months in London soon grew bright again at Cowes or Trouville. The yachting dresses of this year have touched perfection in their admirable simplicity, and many a man who has failed to realize that a girl in ball-dress or smart park frock is an unusually pretty one has had his eyes suddenly opened to the fact when he sees her in a neat Redfern, in which all the points of correct nautical costume have been feminized and adapted to the graceful figure and the beautiful *chevelure* of the average English girl.

To the brilliant season we say farewell with less sorrow because next year brings another Jubilee, that of the Queen's coronation ; and the celebration of the Silver Wedding of our Prince of Wales and his dear and sweet Princess.

LONDON SOCIETY.

OCTOBER, 1887.

A LIFE INTEREST.

By MRS. ALEXANDER,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOING O'T," "AT BAY," "BY WOMAN'S WIT," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

"BREAKING UP."

BACK again in Falkland Terrace! How strange, yet painfully familiar it seemed.

The three or four months which had elapsed since she left it were as so many ages to Marjory; and measured by the change they had wrought in her—the sobering, ripening effect they had produced—were, in truth, equal to years. She was surprised to find how much she missed Ellis during the short time which intervened between his departure and her own. She felt keenly that his intervention had often saved her from the irritating worry of Uncle Carteret. That distinguished dilettante was, however, so pleased to exchange his country place for hard cash, that at the last he grew somewhat gracious, and even bestowed upon Marjory some ancient books, "Telemachus," bound in calf, a stray volume or two of "Rollin's Ancient History," a copy of "Childe Harold," minus a few pages, nibbled by mice, and "Young's Night Thoughts." He also assured his grand-niece that he was glad he had been of use to her—that no doubt her residence with him would prove a mental stimulus which might help her to resist the *bourgeois* influence of her ordinary surroundings.

Mrs. Carteret was very kind. She said she should miss Marjory's pleasant reading aloud, and that she had been an agreeable and well-bred inmate; finally she bestowed on her a *portemonnaie* with some bright new sovereigns in its recesses. Poor Marjory was almost ashamed of herself for the solid comfort she felt in the possession of those bright gold pieces, but she knew she was going back to penury and prison, and money is always a powerful friend.

Uncle and Aunt Carteret had decided to drive to the country

town, where the mayor and the authorities who managed the museum had invited the former to partake of luncheon and inspect the room set apart for the reception of his splendid gift. Thence they were to start for London, and Marjory, accompanied by Mrs. Carteret's maid, was to join the train when it stopped at Market Gilston, with all the impedimenta of the travellers.

As on the occasion of their arrival, a heavy, unexpected shower descended as they drove to the station, and as she had thoughtlessly packed up her rain cloak, her thin dress and light jacket were soon wet through. No one noticed her condition, as the sympathetic Virginie went into a second-class carriage, so by the time Marjory, having parted with her relatives at Paddington, had rumbled in a slow four-wheeler all the weary way to Falkland Terrace, she was flushed and shivering, and could hardly keep her teeth from chattering, with a strange feeling of cold, which yet did not prevent her feeling feverish.

Mr. and Mrs. Acland were just going to dinner when she arrived, and putting off her hat in the study, she joined them at once.

"We were beginning to wonder what had become of you, Marjory," said Mrs. Acland graciously, after greetings and inquiries had been exchanged. "But I told your father, that travelling with such staid people as Mr. and Mrs. Carteret, he might be sure you would be well looked after."

Marjory smiled to her father, and answered pleasantly, while she said to herself, "Perhaps Mrs. Acland is going to be kinder; if so, I will try and stay a little with my father and get him to notice and to know me, before I go away to seek my fortune."

"I think," remarked Mr. Acland, "I think Marjory has grown since she was away, and she has quite a colour!"

"She is looking very well indeed!" said his wife.

"I should think I have a colour," cried Marjory laughing, and putting her hands to her cheeks. "I got a wetting to-day, and fear I have taken cold, for I am burning and shivering at once."

"That is a pity, directly you come home too! You had better go to bed early, and have some gruel," said Mrs. Acland. "It would be very unfortunate if you were laid up, supposing Mr. Carteret were to consent to take you abroad. I intend to call on Mrs. Carteret, and see what can be done in the matter."

"You may save yourself the trouble I am sure, *I tried in vain.*"

"Why?" asked Mrs. Acland facetiously. "How was it that so charming a girl as you are, failed to fascinate the old gentleman?"

"Fascinating! Me?" exclaimed Marjory, perceiving the undertone of sarcasm, but determined not to show she did. "It would take far greater powers of fascination than I possess to fascinate Uncle Carteret; besides, he never held out any hope that he would keep me longer than while he wanted me in the country. He scarcely seemed pleased with what I did, and I really did my best."

"Come now, Marjory, tell the truth; did you never lose your

temper and give saucy answers?" asked Mrs. Acland, with a smile which stung her step-daughter. She retained her composure, however, though she was trembling with the fever that was gaining upon her.

"I think I only answered him sharply once, and that was when he said something disagreeable about my father not caring for me and my mother being of higher birth; then I stood up for my own people, you may be sure; of course I know nothing of the family history." Having dealt this blow, Marjory paused abruptly.

Mrs. Acland looked at her, positively startled. Some remarkable change had taken place in this provoking girl. Formerly she was merely a passionate, insubordinate child whose efforts at resistance only tightened her chains, now she had suddenly reappeared, "clothed" with a tone of well-bred self-possession, and "in her right mind" as to her use of possible facts; this was a dangerous antagonist, to be relegated as soon as possible to a distance.

Mr. Acland was, however, a good deal agitated.

"This is a most unwarrantable assertion on the part of Mr. Carteret," he said, "and I shall call him to account for it; I am not aware that I have failed in any duty to my children. I should be inhuman if I preferred the younger to the elder, or the elder to the younger. Impartiality is my aim, and I think, Marjory, you must be aware that I have given you every advantage in my power, with justice to others—with justice to others."

"I am sure you always intend to be kind," returned Marjory in a low tone.

Mrs. Acland marked the reservation, but kept silence.

"I shall seek an interview with Mr. Carteret, and demand an explanation of his words," reiterated Mr. Acland pompously.

"You will make him very, very angry, but it can't be helped. Do you know I feel so ill and giddy, I shall just go to bed." She rose, glad to escape to the silence and darkness of her own room.

Never had the sordid discomfort of that room seemed so miserable.

At the Priory her chamber was not luxurious. The furniture was old-fashioned, the hangings faded, but all was clean, neat and pleasant to the eye, while the outlook over the flower garden was delightful. Here, the sloping roof only allowed her to stand upright in the centre; an iron bedstead of the commonest description, covered with that abomination, a coloured counterpane, a painted washstand, the paint worn off in patches, a much darned square of carpet, and a glass which required a large amount of paper stuffed between the frame and the supports to prevent its presenting the wooden back to those who would fain look at their own image. The window was innocent of curtains; indeed there was no means of fastening them to a window in the roof.

It was not so much the actual discomfort as the extreme ugliness which helped to depress Marjory till she could not restrain

her tears. Was she going to be ill in that horrible room? If so, she must get well the best way she could; she would have little attention, and that grudgingly given.

She made no attempt to unpack; indeed, one unsteady chest of drawers and a row of hooks on the wall was all the accommodation offered for bestowing her increased possessions, so Marjory got into bed as fast as she could, thankful to put out the light and lay her head on the pillow.

But sleep was far from her eyes. Presently she heard some one ascending the garret-stair. Her door was opened and the voice of "Cookie" exclaimed:

"Eh! in bed already! I've brought you a basin of gruel, Miss Marjory. Have you any matches?"

"I got into bed without thinking of them."

"Ah, well, there'll be some in the girl's room. I'll get them!" Sounds of groping were heard, and cook returned with a light.

How glad Marjory was to see her broad strong face; she could have hugged her. "Oh, thank you, Cookie, dear! It is so good of you to come up all this way."

"I wanted to see you, miss; it seems long since you was away. There, sup it up. It's nice and hot and sweet; I put in some shreds of lemon peel to give it a flavour."

"I am sure it is very good; sit down by me, Cookie. I don't think I can hold the basin steady."

"Eh! but you are all of a tremble; stay, I'll put a shawl round you, your hands is burning. How did you take cold?"

Marjory told her.

"Ah! there is nothing worse than sitting in wet clothes. I remember my eldest sister's daughter, a bit of girl just your age, sat in wet things, took a bad cold, and just went out like the snuff of a candle. Can't ye sup the gruel? I know I made it as smooth as silk."

"It is as nice as nice can be, but I cannot swallow it. It seems quite impossible! Stay a little with me, and I shall get to sleep; a good night's rest will make me quite right."

"Lie down then and I'll tuck you up; you'll not be fit to leave your bed to-morrow. Well, I suppose you have had fine times in the country. It's dreary work coming back here to a garret like this."

"Yes, it was very pleasant at Langford Priory—quiet enough—but there were books and flowers and beautiful walks."

"And no grand parties?" asked cook, dissatisfied. "I thought you would have big dinners every other day. Two soups, two fishes, entrées, roasts, iced pudding, and all that. I thought maybe you'd bring me back a notion or two; for between you and me my hand is getting 'out' here."

"We had no parties of that kind. I was at one dance; it was delightful. I should like to go to one every night; at least I did

think so. At this moment I don't feel to care for anything. I am all over aches and pains, and so—so cold."

"You want a hot bottle to your feet; I'll get one for you. It's a pity you can't take the gruel; and have you any word of Mr. Cranston?"

"Yes, I have seen him. He is well, and doing well; he is an architect, or going to be an architect; that is a man who builds beautiful houses, and churches, and things. He was doing work for a great nobleman."

"I knew he'd do well!" cried cook triumphantly. "He isn't made of the stuff that fails; he'll be a great man yet. The house has just been an 'owling wilderness since you and the young gentlemen left. I'm thinking of leaving myself."

"Oh, Cookie!" murmured Marjory, who felt the good-natured woman's talk a little overpowering.

"Yes, I don't feel as how I can stay. It's not a bad place, nor is your step-ma a bad mistress. She's orderly and economical, but she's not stingy by no manner o' means, and she knows how to treat a good servant; but somehow I never did take to her, and I say she hacted shameful to her own boy! A fine handsome fellow any mother might be proud of! She ain't fond of *you*, Miss Marjory, any one can see that with half an eye, and she don't make things pleasant for you; at any rate I could forgive her better, for you ain't her own, but Mr. Dick—such a real gentleman——Well, I'll not stop here keeping you awake. I'll just get you a hot bottle and a box of matches." She took up the rejected gruel and departed, soon returning, somewhat breathless, with the promised hot bottle, which she put to her patient's feet, re-tucking her up with great care. "There now, the candle and matches are on the chair beside you, and I'll come and look after you myself to-morrow."

Marjory scarce heard what she said; she fell heavily asleep for a short time and then woke suddenly, palpitating with a vague terror, of she knew not what.

It was a horrible night; she only fell asleep to dream, and wake to vivid consciousness of pain and distress. In her dreams she was generally flying wildly from Ellis, who pursued her with the expression of cold unflinching cruelty she remembered in his face when she had seen him beat his dog, and he was always on the point of overtaking her, with the object of hurling her down a deep precipice, along the top of which she was running.

But morning came at last, and then the housemaid, who was sent to inquire what kept Miss Acland, brought so bad an account of her that Mrs. Acland herself ascended to the upper chamber, where Marjory tossed and turned, seeking in vain for a position where she might be at ease.

"You are very seriously unwell!" said Mrs. Acland in a tone of just displeasure. "It was unspeakably imprudent of you to leave yourself without a wrap in uncertain weather."

"It was not uncertain. It had been fine all the morning, some heavy clouds came up just as we were leaving and then drenched us before we got to the station."

"There is all the danger of its turning to something infectious, and then we shall have the expense of sending the children out of the house, to say nothing of a doctor's bill, for you *must* see the doctor," pursued Mrs. Acland.

"You cannot bring the doctor *here*," murmured Marjory, raising herself for an instant, to glance round the room.

"No, of course not! It would never do to drag Dr. Wells up this height, you must come down to the spare room."

There was an expressive silence, then Marjory said with an effort, "I don't feel as if I could stand or walk."

"Then you must be wrapped up and carried," returned Mrs. Acland, with decision. "And I shall see about it at once. I know the bed is aired, for I make Elizabeth sleep there occasionally."

Marjory did not reply, she was wishing her step-mother had delegated the task of keeping the bed aired to her, instead of Elizabeth, a little slavey, whose labours were divided between the kitchen and the nursery.

She was quite willing, however, that she should be found by the family doctor installed in the sacred spare room. She did not wish that any slur should be cast on her father, and were she seen lying ill in that miserable garret, it would be to every one's discredit. "He cannot, of course, go into the details of household management. I don't suppose he knows what room I have. When I am well and feel up to it, I will try and find an opportunity of speaking to my father when he is alone, and then I shall be able really to judge whether he would be sorry if I left his house or not! If he does care a little bit about me, it would be a great comfort. I wonder if Mr. Ellis is really as fond of me as he thinks he is? I am sure I would marry him, and get away from all this if he did not want to keep the marriage a secret; that would be too horrid; and I do not see how it could be managed. Will he call, as he said he would? How surprised Mrs. Acland will be; I must say something about him, in case he does come." So mused Marjory as she lay, feeling very ill and helpless. She fancied it would be better and less puzzling if Ellis did *not* come; yet she was aware she would be disappointed if he did not; giving up, and being given up, are two very different things.

But she felt drowsy and confused, nor could she follow any line of thought long or clearly. It seemed ages since Mrs. Acland proposed carrying her down-stairs, when nurse and the parlour-maid suddenly stood beside her bed, with blankets and a shawl.

"Oh, I am sure I can walk, if one of you will hold my arm; give me my slippers. Sarah, please go down-stairs before me, then I shall not see how steep they are."

Though she once nearly fell, from giddiness rather than weak-

ness, Marjory reached the haven of the spare room safely, and felt thankful to be in a bed so much more comfortable than her own.

By the time the doctor appeared on the scene, everything was in apple-pie order, and Marjory surrounded by all the niceties a sick room should have.

After an interview with his patient, the doctor descended to the dining-room to write his prescription and have a confidential talk with Mrs. Acland.

"Nothing in the least infectious, my dear madam, nothing, I assure you. But a severe chill, such as she has had, may lead to rheumatic fever, to, in short, many maladies; her nerves, too, seem irritable. Timely remedies, however, and your good care will, I trust, prevent serious mischief; you are not aware that the young lady has any mental anxiety?"

"None whatever, so far as I know, but she is somewhat reserved, I may say sullen; you doctors are behind the scenes in so many families, that I do not mind admitting to *you*, that the position of a step-mother is not a bed of roses, even where young people are well disposed. I have not Miss Acland's confidence."

"Ah, very likely, very likely! But a woman of your character will win it, finally. There, my dear madam, the mixture every two hours, the febrifuge morning and night, and plenty of lemonade, not too sweet, a few spoonfuls of beef-tea, in the form of jelly, occasionally; she will need little nourishment to-day, and I will look in in the evening, when I hope to find the pulse considerably lower."

Much impressed by Mrs. Acland's words and manner, the doctor went on his rounds, and when, some time after, a little talk arose about Marjory having left her father's house, Dr. Wells always declared that no girl could have had more tender and motherly care bestowed upon her than Mr. Acland's eldest daughter.

Youth, and a sound constitution, aided the doctor's skill, and Marjory soon threw off her feverish symptoms. She was still very weak, and could not shake off the sense of depression which weighed her down.

Mrs. Acland's visits were not cheering, although she abstained from absolutely unpleasant or stinging speeches. She was sincerely anxious for Marjory's complete recovery, that she might commence the operations necessary for putting her out of the house.

For what long hours she used to lie alone, dreaming rather than thinking clearly; never before had she realized how utterly isolated she was. Her school friends had been kind, but their letters had dropped off; the music teacher was married, and gone to live in a big seaport town; Aunt Carteret had called to inquire for her, and written a nicely-expressed farewell note, previous to leaving town, so they, Marjory felt, had passed out of her life. There were left George, Dick and—Ellis. Of the dear boys she would probably never see much, and Ellis must be all or nothing, if

indeed he ever crossed her path again. What she wanted was a kind woman friend, older and wiser than herself, all the men in the world could not supply the place of a tender, large-hearted woman, to whom she could tell everything, as she never could to a man. Why had her own dear mother been taken from her? Oh! to lay her head on a mother's shoulder and feel safe and at rest! how bitterly she wept over her own destitution, in the silence and solitude of her sick room.

"Dr. Wells thinks you may go down-stairs to-morrow, in the afternoon, Marjory," said Mrs. Acland as she came in for her anti-prandial visit. "Once you are regularly up and dressed, you will soon get on. I think Louise will be glad to begin her lessons again, she has had a long holiday."

"I suppose she was not let to come and see me."

"I thought it safer not, the atmosphere of a sick room is not very good for a child; you shall see her to-morrow. There has been a visitor for you to-day, a Mr. Vere Ellis."

"Oh, indeed!" returned Marjory, in as indifferent a tone as she could manage, but painfully conscious that she had flushed to her brow.

"Yes, I was rather puzzled when he was shown up, as you had never mentioned him."

"I was too ill to think of it. He is a sort of relation, you know."

"I know nothing about it; he did not say so," fixing her eyes searchingly on Marjory. "He said he had only just come from Paris, where he had seen Mr. and Mrs. Carteret, and he thought you would like to hear of them."

"Oh, yes, of course."

"I suppose this Mr. Vere Ellis was a visitor at the Priory."

"He was a good deal to-and-fro."

"It is rather remarkable, a man of his apparent rank and position, taking the trouble to call upon *you*."

"I do not see that," cried Marjory; "he is a relation, at least I believe he is, and we were very good friends while he stayed in the house, I do not see, either, that he is anything so superior to myself."

"Ah, you have not, evidently, fallen in your own estimation." Silence. Marjory, though dying to hear what Ellis had said, would not permit herself to ask a question respecting him.

"I shall tell your father of this visit, Marjory."

"By all means; I suppose Mr. Ellis left a card for him."

"I do not think he did!"

"Mr. Ellis is very remiss then." This in a tone of superiority which amazed Mrs. Acland.

"I fear Mr. and Mrs. Carteret spoilt you, Marjory! If they took a fancy to you, I wonder they sent you back on your father's hands."

"Because, I suppose, they thought a father is always ready to welcome a daughter home again," said Marjory, surprised at the steadiness of her own voice, when she knew she was on the verge of a flood of tears.

Mrs. Acland did not answer immediately. Marjory was certainly less easily routed than of yore; she was cooler and more collected.

"It is not always a matter of feeling; people with a large family to provide for are influenced by graver considerations. It would have cost Mr. Carteret very little money, and done you a great deal of good, had he taken you abroad with him for a couple of years. Pray did he make you no present for nearly four months' service."

"Why, you know he and Mrs. Carteret gave me quantities of things before I was fit to be seen at the Priory."

Mrs. Acland frowned. "I mean at parting, you know what I mean."

"Oh, yes! he gave me some old books, 'Telemachus' and 'Young's Night Thoughts.'"

"A valuable gift!" contemptuously.

Marjory was tempted to let the question rest there; but she was too honest.

"Mrs. Carteret gave me five pounds," she added abruptly.

"Oh, indeed! Then you can buy yourself a handsome winter dress, without drawing on your father's purse."

"I intend doing so."

"Well," said Mrs. Acland rising, "it is almost dinner-time, I must leave you; I think you may come down to luncheon to-morrow; you can return to bed early, but it is time you made a beginning. That Mr. Vere Ellis"—Mrs. Acland liked to give her acquaintances their full names and titles—"said something about calling again, but he has to go out of town, so he probably will not have time."

"Very likely! If it puts him out at all he will not come."

It was the second day after Marjory's reappearance at the family board; being a fine Saturday afternoon, Mr. Acland had taken his wife and children for a drive to Hampstead.

Marjory therefore established herself on the sofa in the little study opening on the garden, and began a letter to Dick, whose silence made her uneasy, till it occurred to her that he waited to hear that she was positively settled at home.

Writing was rather a fatigue, but she got on slowly, pausing every now and then to lie back on the sofa and rest.

She felt chilly too, though she had put on the warmest dress she possessed, a soft grey woollen stuff that fell into easy folds, and had further fortified herself by a wisp of creamy lace, given to her by Mrs. Carteret, round her throat. She was very pale, and her eyes looked large and brilliant, though rather sad; she rang, and asked the servant to set light to the fire which was laid ready for

the evening ; after watching it for a few minutes the girl retired, only to return with a card, saying :

"Will you see the gentleman, miss ?"

"Yes," said Marjory, feeling her heart beat hard and then stop, as Ellis walked in. The remembrance of his last words came back vividly to her, and brought the colour in a rush to her pale cheeks.

"And you have been ill—really ill," said Ellis, taking her hand in both his own and gazing at her gravely, intently.

Marjory could hardly keep from tears, she was strangely agitated: "I have really been ill," with a faint smile, "and I feel ridiculously weak."

"Sit down again ; you tremble," resumed Ellis, lifting her little writing-table away and drawing a chair beside her. "Now, the stars in their courses have fought for me ! I hear every one is out, and you will be able to tell me your history since we parted. I, too, have a good deal to say. It is heavenly to see you again !" he broke off abruptly.

"And it is very good of you to say so," returned Marjory, her lip quivering, for she was touched by the welcome warmth of his words and voice, after the indifferent coldness which had chilled her heart when she most needed sympathy. Why should she reject the love so freely offered, when no one else seemed to care about her ?

"Now you are here, I am glad !" she went on after a pause.

"Thank you !" good-humouredly. "That means, you did not want me to come."

"I did—and I did not—you see I want to speak as truly as I can."

"You always do I firmly believe, but I am not going to disturb you to-day with my own hopes and wishes. I see you are not equal to much worry and, so far, I fear I do worry you. Tell me about yourself. How came you to be ill, you, the very embodiment of health ?" And Marjory told him.

"What selfish idiots old Carteret and his wife are," ejaculated Ellis, "not to see you were drenched ! And since you were laid up, how has the step-mother behaved ?"

"Oh, I have been so miserable !" The words burst from her before she could check them. Ellis looked down steadily for an instant or two while she went on. "I do not mean to say that I had not every thing I wanted, but no one cared for me, except poor Cookie, and she could not come up to me often. When Mrs. Acland used to come and sit by me I got quite nervous ; I fancied that if she could kill me with her eyes and not be found out, I should never rise again, in this life at least ; of course—" interrupting herself with a poor attempt to laugh—"that was only when I was feverish—a mere sickly fancy."

"I am not so sure," said Ellis in a low distinct tone.

"And my father, do you know, he never once came to see me."

"I can hardly believe it."

"Oh, I do not know what story *she* told him! I do think he would have come, if he had been let alone. If I ever see him without her, I shall ask him. I cannot bear to think she has put me out of his heart, but I fear—I fear she has." Her voice was choked, and she had a hard struggle to maintain her composure.

Ellis silently took her hand again, holding it with a soft pressure, but releasing it at her first movement of withdrawal.

"But I never *do* have a chance of seeing him! However, I am getting quite well, and in another week I shall speak to my father about getting something to do away from home."

"Ah?" murmured Ellis interrogatively.

"And what do you think of Mrs. Acland?" asked Marjory, after a brief pause.

"She is a handsome, shrewd, clever woman, and I rather fancy she has had a history. Where did your father pick her up?"

Marjory told him all she knew.

"Well, my sweet Marjory, it would have been wiser if you had not declared war upon so potent a power as Mrs. Acland until you had measured your strength with hers."

"At eleven or twelve one has not much forethought; besides, I could not help it. I was jealous of my father from the first."

There was a silence of a few minutes, then Ellis began very gently:

"I said I would not worry you about myself, but I *cannot* keep my word. Grant that you do not love me now, do you not think a home with me would be preferable to the home you have?"

"I have none," murmured Marjory.

"True, and you are shamefully defrauded of your due. I must say your father has sacrificed you utterly. Why do you hesitate to be my wife?"

"For one reason, because I do not see how it is you can love a girl who does not love you, and I ought not to let you sacrifice so much for me."

"And your other reasons?"

"You know," said Marjory shyly.

"Suppose I could go to your father to-morrow, ask his consent, and arrange for the wedding at St. George's?—joy-bells and favours—would you say yes?"

"I think," returned Marjory deliberately, "I should—I should, learn to love you, because you are good to me, and I never dreamed of caring for any one before. I never saw any one I could care for—only," she paused, "I am half afraid of you; and when I think of that dog, it makes me doubt."

"What dog?"

"The dog you beat."

Ellis burst out laughing.

"That is too absurd! Do you think I would beat you?"

"N—no, but you might be cruel!"

"You are unjust and illogical, Marjory! You say you do not wish me to make any sacrifice for you, yet you are ready to accept my ruin, which open marriage with you would be. My darling, don't you see that if I am your husband my career is yours. In my profession or calling, money is of the last importance; a poor married *attaché* might as well retire from the combat at once. I look for help in more ways than one from old Carteret. I will not cut myself off from that. In a couple of years I hope to have an appointment which may make me more independent, when we can throw off the mask—need I say how gladly?"

"But if only for so short a time, would it not be wiser to wait?"

"What? and endure the separation, the knowledge that you were undergoing all the wretchedness your step-mother will heap upon you, all the minor miseries of a governess or companion's life. No, Marjory, not for any amount of bliss at the end. Listen to me. Having just received my appointment, I have a couple of months' leave; make up your mind, and return with me; trust to my management. No one shall know your whereabouts really, till it is too late to interfere, and I will undertake to bring your father to reason. Remember, you have virtually accepted me! just picture the life we can lead together." And he went on to describe existence in Paris, in glowing terms, till Marjory felt her brain bewildered. "You are so young," he concluded, "a year or two of seclusion will only give you a chance of acquiring the knowledge and accomplishments which would fit you better to fill, and to enjoy, your position hereafter; and are you quite indifferent to the happiness you can bestow?"

"But a secret marriage! Could one ever throw off the slur?" asked Marjory.

"There would be no slur to throw off."

"Is it not growing late? They will be back soon."

"Ah, you want to get rid of me?"

"No, but it would be awkward."

"Very well! When shall I see you again? Here is my address, you will write if you want anything. In a few days I am going to Scotland, to shoot. I must see you again first. I must not forget to tell you Mrs. Carteret says she misses you much; old Carteret thinks he has heart disease, so he has, but not of the right sort. They are thinking of settling in Rome as a permanent winter residence. Now, Marjory, I must leave you; think of all I have urged; give yourself to me, and turn your back on coldness, and suppression, and worries, for I love you, my sweet one, more than it has ever entered into your heart *as yet*, to imagine, and I will not live without you."

He pressed a long tender kiss on her hand, and was gone.

Marjory sat down and buried her face in the sofa cushion and

tried to reflect; for the first time she began to think of the possibility of marrying Ellis, but not in secret—no—unless her father was ready to throw her off; then she would, indeed be of no importance to any one, save the lover who importuned her so persuasively.

CHAPTER XX.

“NOTHING VENTURE, NOTHING HAVE.”

ONCE up and dressed, Marjory recovered rapidly, and Mrs. Acland soon discovered she was quite equal to the task of teaching the children. This was more irksome than ever; Louise, though still affectionate, and delighted to see her step-sister, had been much spoiled during her absence, and Herbert was always intolerable. However, from this species of slavery she was determined to free herself.

Ellis had called again, but Mrs. Acland was at home, and Marjory was amused to see that he bestowed most of his attention on her. He managed, however, at parting to press a note into Marjory's hand, begging her to walk towards Hanover Gate alone, between two and four on any one of the three following days, as he had something special to tell her. Marjory doubted, hesitated, and wrote to say she could not; that it would be useless, and would only give both pain.

The following afternoon, which was damp and drizzling, a seedy-looking man rang and inquired if Mrs. Acland was at home. She had gone out, however, and would not be home till late.

The seedy man departed, and some ten minutes after, Ellis presented himself and was admitted.

Marjory was half-flattered, half-scared, by this bold perseverance. Ellis did not stay long. “I go North to-morrow,” he said, “but I could not leave without seeing you; I want to know what you are doing or going to do.”

“I am acting unpaid governess to my little brother and sister at present, but I intend proposing to advertise for an engagement and to relieve my father of one burden. If I see that he is sorry, it will not alter my intention, but it will comfort me.”

“And suppose he jumps at the scheme?”

“Well, then I do not care what becomes of me.”

“If, then, there is no one else to give you any love, you may accept mine.”

“I am half inclined to say I will; but certainly *not*, if I see I am still dear to my father, and I think—I hope—I am.”

“Then I will wait your decision,” said Ellis, after a minute's thought. “I shall be in town again in a few weeks, and then you must decide. Marjory, you have it in your power to mar my

life, or make it ; perhaps you exercise the same power over your own. Do not thoughtlessly cast me from you."

Marjory did not speak ; her bosom heaved, the tears stood in her eyes. "I do not know how to decide," she exclaimed, pressing her hands together. "I have nothing to guide me save my own instincts, and they are against you, yet—yet, I do not like to think I shall never see you again."

"Then bind me to you for ever," whispered Ellis. "But I will not press you, I will ask your final answer when I return ; once I have your consent all will be easy, trust to me. I must leave you, for I have much to do ; I never thought it would cost me such a pang to part, even for a few days, from any human being ; think of me, longing, waiting, hoping for you. Good-bye, Marjory." He pressed her hand to his heart, and left her, more anxious, more uncertain than ever, almost wishing she could love as he did, for then doubt would be gone.

For a few days Marjory watched eagerly for an opportunity of speaking to her father when he was alone, but in vain ; Mrs. Acland never gave her a chance. Marjory watched his manner his voice, with keenest observation, striving to find out if he cared for and noticed her. He was tranquil and undemonstrative, showing cordiality only to his younger children. He answered Marjory civilly, if she spoke to him, but rarely addressed her of his own accord.

This time of waiting and watching was cheered by a letter from George, written from the Cape in the highest spirits. The young invalid son of the great shipowner had singled him out and quite made a companion of him. He undertook to show him some sport when they got to Madras, as they were to make a short stay there, and he (Charles Rennie) was so much better that he felt up to shooting a tiger. Even this satisfactory communication did not rouse Marjory from her increasing gloom and uneasiness ; she felt she was at a turning-point in her life ; should she go to the right hand or to the left ?

Ellis's carefully restrained passion, his considerate tenderness, had begun to impress her ; would any one else ever love her so much ?

At length, finding it useless to attempt a private interview with her father, unless, indeed, with Mrs. Acland's knowledge and assistance, she strung herself to the humiliating effort of asking it.

"I have been thinking about my future," she said abruptly to her step-mother one wet afternoon as she sat at needle-work with that lady. "I should like to do something to maintain myself ; I am not fit for much, but I might teach children, or be a companion, or something."

"It is a very proper idea, Marjory ; would you like me to speak to your father about it ?"

"I should like to speak to him myself, and alone, if you will give me the opportunity," returned Marjory bluntly.

"Oh, certainly, if you wish," with a bland smile, "though I cannot see the object of a private interview; your father will tell me all that passes between you."

"No doubt; still I should like to see my father alone."

"Very well, do not worry him this evening, after the fatigue of business; say your say to-morrow morning."

"There is so little time then."

"Nevertheless, it will be better when your father is fresh."

Marjory could say no more. She felt that she was really in her step-mother's hands, but she had done her best.

Next morning, as soon as breakfast was over Mrs. Acland rose ostentatiously, saying, "Marjory wishes to have a few words in private with you," and left the room.

"Well, make them as few as possible," and Mr. Acland looked unmistakably nervous as he spoke.

This pressure drove poor Marjory's ideas and intentions into the blankest confusion; the little speech she had composed with a view to testing her father's feelings vanished.

"I—I—wish to do something for myself; I don't like living any longer at your expense, so will you consent to my putting an advertisement in the *Times*?"

"An advertisement for what?"

"For a situation as governess, or companion, or—or housemaid, or anything," cried Marjory, firing up.

"Yes, you may; if you are discontented with your home you had better leave it, and learn its value when you have roughed it elsewhere. But you need not delay *me* to talk on this subject; you have a more efficient adviser in your mother."

"Mother!" repeated Marjory, bursting into passionate tears.

"I have no mother; I have lost both father and mother."

"I greatly fear, Marjory, your ungoverned temper will destroy your success and happiness in life. You might have the kindest and wisest of mothers, and an attached father, but your head-strong nature rejects both. I cannot allow you to mar the comfort of my home, the—the repose of my excellent wife. It is better you *should* leave us, at any rate, till you can live at peace with her. Consult Mrs. Acland as to the details of your plan, and be guided by her."

"Very well," returned Marjory, with sudden composure, though her voice was still unsteady and her eyes wet. "I have your consent and will act as best I can. I don't think you can be as indifferent to me as you seem; I do not deserve it."

"Really, Marjory, really—" began Mr. Acland, in a more natural tone, but Marjory left the room without seeming to hear him.

She was outwardly very quiet for the rest of the day; she settled herself to write her advertisement in the deserted school-room,

but even the memories evoked by that melancholy abode did not call forth any further fits of weeping, she felt that she was really beginning life, and her spirit rose to the occasion. Already she felt half emancipated. At luncheon she told Mrs. Acland that she was going out, to leave her advertisement at a stationer's in the neighbourhood, as her father approved her project. "I shall go to Shoolbred's afterwards," she added; "their autumn sale is going on, and I want a dress, and many things."

Mrs. Acland was struck by her tone. "Pray, do you expect us to pay for whatever *you* choose to order?"

"Certainly not; I have my own money, and do not intend to ask my father for anything."

"I am glad to hear it! You must not expect, however, that an engagement will fall into your mouth the moment you ask for one."

"I do not, Mrs. Acland."

The next week was feverishly busy and anxious. On Marjory's return home from her expedition to the news agent, she found the housemaid in the act of transporting her belongings from "the spare room" to the garret. It was an additional stab, but she determined to take no notice, and in this eyrie she passed hours, diligently working to have her wardrobe in order for a sudden summons, and thinking as diligently, revolving the perpetual questions: Shall I? Shall I not? Would Ellis reappear before she actually left her home, and, if he did, what possible plan could he devise by which their marriage could be kept secret from her own people? Dare she trust him? Was it worth while dragging on an unloved, unlovely life, when warmth and colour and tenderness were to be had for the taking?

At last her modest little advertisement appeared; she thought she had devised it cunningly, but it looked wofully insignificant amid the crowd of "Want Situations," which filled the mighty columns of *The Times*.

Mrs. Acland's eagle eye quickly detected it, and she read it aloud at breakfast with a slightly scornful accent, which thrilled Marjory with painful indignation. "Not very striking, Marjory. I am afraid you will get no replies; you would have done better to let *me* apply to the Governesses' Institution; I know the superintendent a little."

"I prefer to try myself first."

"Very foolish indeed," said Mr. Acland with melancholy emphasis; but did not pursue the subject.

In the afternoon, Marjory, with a sinking heart went to see if there were any answers for "M. A." Alas! there were none; nor the next day; the six and sixpence she had expended in the hope of finding independence was lost!

The third morning she had hardly hope enough to pay another visit to the agent. But lo! a neat-looking letter, with a handsome seal, awaited her.

Only a sense of propriety restrained her from flying back at full speed, as she would not open it till safe in the shelter of the old schoolroom. There, with breathless impatience, yet carefully avoiding any injury to the imposing seal, she extracted the letter. It was framed in the usual style of such a reply, and informed M. A. that the writer wished for a cheerful young person, who could read aloud pleasantly and give some instruction to a boy of nine years old, who was a cripple and in delicate health; that as the engagement was an easy one the writer could not offer more than thirty pounds a year, with travelling expenses, should the family go abroad, as was their intention. A speedy reply, with references, was requested; this communication was signed Jean Morrison, and bore the address, Craighall, by Strathlogan, L—shire.

"Thirty pounds a year, seven pounds ten a quarter!" thought Marjory. "I ought to be able to save money out of that; I may grow quite fond of the poor boy!" and Marjory swiftly ran up a splendid castle. Then the thought, "What will Mr. Ellis say if I am gone before he comes back? Will he follow me? It would be dreadful if he did; it would seem strange! I think I must write and tell him. What will Mrs. Acland say? I wish she would come in. I will not answer, till I have shown this letter to my father."

After trying to settle to needle-work in vain, Marjory took out a letter she had received from Dick, and wrote a long reply, touching on all topics save one, the most important. Dick, on his side, had written very fully; he seemed to enjoy pouring out all his hopes and plans. He was anxious, he said, about Brand, who was evidently unwell. He (Brand) was afraid he should be obliged to give up the work he had undertaken in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, and get away south, which would be a great loss to him, as he was well paid and interested in what he was doing.

"I wonder what George and Dick would say, if they knew Mr. Ellis wanted to marry me. They would hardly believe it. But, oh! how vexed they would be if I married clandestinely, I should never bear to look at them unless—unless—" here she broke off the thread of her thoughts, and applied herself to her letter.

* * * * *

"Marjory has absolutely had an answer to her advertisement," said Mrs. Acland, coming in to her husband's dressing-room that evening. "She will show it to you after dinner; now be advised by me, dear, do not make a fuss about her, she is disposed to try her strength with me. It seems a very good chance, this offer she has had, let her go; we can always recall her, and she is so determined in her opposition to me since her return, that I think, in justice to your wife, without any ill-feeling towards your daughter, you are bound to show a certain amount of displeasure; she thinks you will not like to let her go, but there is really no hardship in

it; girls much better off than Marjory like to earn their own pocket-money, and relieve their parents."

"Still," said Mr. Acland, "I do *not* like letting her go, though she is insubordinate and troublesome. However, what you say is just, and I will not make a fuss about her. But I depend on *you*, my love, to make careful inquiry respecting the people who have answered Marjory; the child must not run any unnecessary risk."

"Trust to me," returned Mrs. Acland confidently. "I am as anxious about her as you can possibly be, only she must not see it."

Thus fore-armed, Mr. Acland read the letter presented to him unmoved, while Marjory watched him with eager eyes.

"Strathlogan—'um! the post town, I suppose. This is not a bad offer, Marjory; you cannot expect a high salary, as you are neither highly educated nor accomplished."

"I am quite aware of that," cried Marjory.

"If, therefore," resumed Mr. Acland, clearing his throat, "you wish to leave your home, you might as well try this place."

"Do *you* wish me to stay in my home, father?" asked Marjory, and there was a touch of pathos in her voice.

"I wish to leave you perfectly free," he returned calmly; "do what seems best in your eyes; it is better you should feel your own way. Mrs. Acland will, I am sure, give you all the assistance in her power, and I will pay for your journey."

"Then I will write my reply to-night," said Marjory, bearing up bravely under her father's indifference. "The sooner the matter is settled, the better."

"That was well done," remarked Mrs. Acland as Marjory left the room; "if she only stays a few months and then returns to us, it will be a wholesome discipline."

Mr. Acland did not reply.

The correspondence with Mrs. Morrison continued satisfactorily; she professed herself contented with the reference offered by Marjory to the clergyman whose church she attended; finally, she wished Miss Acland could make arrangements to come to Craighall on the twenty-second of October; the nearest station was Strathlogan, where a carriage should await her.

Marjory felt that her fate was fixed. The twenty-second was only a week off. Ought she to let Ellis know? He had almost a right to be warned of her movements; she could not make up her mind to write to him; it would look like asking him to interfere. She held her hand, therefore, contenting herself with sending a few lines to Dick, telling him of her approaching departure.

Mrs. Acland had accused her one day, before her father, of carrying on a correspondence with "that boy Dick," and Marjory had at once acknowledged it, had given a short account of their meeting, and of Dick's promising prospects, suppressing only Brand.

Mr. Acland said he was pleased to hear he was getting on, and

for his own part believed he would succeed. Mrs. Acland added in a doubtful tone she was sure she hoped so, and no more was said on the subject. Mr. Acland had no objection evidently to his daughter holding communication with his step-son.

Now all things were settled. Mrs. Morrison mentioned in her final letter that they would be going to Edinburgh in a few days, previous to proceeding abroad. This rejoiced Marjory. "Abroad" sounded vaguely delightful; in short, had it not been for the complications with Ellis, she would have felt brave and comparatively cheerful about this her first plunge into the wild waters of the world; but the idea of his possible pursuit disturbed and unhinged her. It was over a fortnight since she had seen him; would he fulfil his threat, his promise to seek her again?

The third morning before Marjory was to set forth on her first venture, was bright and crisp. She had gone out to do some last remnants of shopping for herself, and a few commissions for Mrs. Acland, who was busy preparing for her husband's departure by a night train to Wales, where he had been summoned by an old client, whose health would not permit of his coming up to town.

It was rather an unusual event for Mr. Acland to leave home, and Marjory felt anxious and curious to see how he would part with her. Surely at the last he would show some tenderness for his eldest daughter? "I suppose," she thought, "when I was a little thing, he was as fond of me as he is now of Louise and Herbert. If a father can change so much, *who* can one depend on?"

Mrs. Acland had completed her preparations, and sat down in the dining-room to read the morning paper until the early dinner was ready. She was in a placid mood; things were prospering with her. Once Mr. Acland was accustomed to the idea of Marjory earning her own bread, there was little need of her ever crossing their threshold again, or at least only on very rare occasions. "Then the girl may marry, she looks pretty, or rather attractive at times; that might be troublesome, however, and cause a disagreeable examination into affairs. I wonder what brings that man Ellis here? It must be some fancy for Marjory, but he is too cool and experienced a man of the world to think of *marrying* her. Well, I suppose she must learn to take care of herself, as others have learnt. She has a hundred advantages I never knew; had I been brought up as she has been, how differently I should have acted, and yet the chit doubts me. She has been ten times more scornful since she returned from the Priory. I must warn her father not to let her cuddle and cry over him when he goes to-night."

Here, the front door bell rung sharply.

"Is the drawing-room fire alight? That may be a visitor," said Mrs. Acland to the servant who was laying the cloth.

"Yes, 'm," she replied, glancing through the window. "It's a

gentleman, 'm," and she hastened to admit him, soon returning to announce, "Mr. Ellis."

"Oh! very well, let the children have their dinner without me. I do not think Miss Acland will be in yet awhile."

Having looked quickly but carefully in the glass, to see that her dainty morning cap was perfectly straight, her lace *cravate* duly arranged, she went up to receive her visitor with a very thoughtful expression.

"You will, I hope, excuse me for presenting myself at so early an hour," said Ellis, "but I was anxious to see you and Miss Acland, as I was commissioned to call."

"I am very glad to see you; pray sit down. Marjory is out. Has she told you she is going away from home?"

"Miss Acland has never honoured me with a letter," returned Ellis as he took a seat facing Mrs. Acland, "and it is of more importance that I should speak to *you* than to her."

"Indeed!" Mrs. Acland waited for him to go on, thinking that although not good-looking he had a fine strong face and most distinguished manners, superior to those of any man *she* had ever met before, except perhaps her first husband's, whose memory was always distasteful to her.

"Though I did not hear it from Miss Acland," resumed Ellis, "I know from another source that she is going to some friends of mine—or I should say acquaintances, and I promised to call and tell you something about them."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Acland again, fixing her eyes on his face with a keen watchful expression.

"Well," resumed Ellis, "Mrs. Morrison is exceedingly respectable. She keeps her eldest son's house, she has also a daughter and a little boy, very much younger than his sister. I do not say they are of the highest class of gentry, but they are of the higher class of farmers, and I think Miss Acland might be very comfortable with them. I had their shooting some years ago, and again this autumn."

"It is rather remarkable your knowing them," said Mrs. Acland slowly.

"Yes, it *is* remarkable," he returned.

"Of course Mr. Acland and myself are most anxious that Marjory's surroundings should be all that is refined and respectable."

"I suppose so, as you allow her to leave your house."

"I understand your tone, Mr. Ellis. In justice to myself I must say that Marjory leaves us by her own distinct desire. She could stay at home if she chose, but I must admit that I should be more than mortal if I opposed her desire to go. She has destroyed the peace of our home, and tried to set my husband against me."

"These are grave charges," said Ellis with a smile; "I am not surprised at your being glad to get rid of such an inmate."

There was a short pause—then Mrs. Acland bent her eyes on the ground, and said carelessly, "Probably you find her interesting."

"I confess I do. She is not a common character, and without disparagement to either of you, I can imagine you would be happier apart."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Acland, raising her eyes suddenly to her visitor's with a peculiar smile, "you think it would be an act of pure philanthropy to assist in separating us?"

"Perhaps," returned Ellis, looking steadily at her.

"If I were assured of Marjory's welfare," resumed Mrs. Acland in a bland tone, "for, believe me, I am her sincere well-wisher, I confess I should not regret *anything* that would remove her to a distance, but of course I should like to know she was happy."

"Of course, my dear Mrs. Acland; and suppose this engagement led to the accomplishment of both these objects? You would not permit too minute inquiries to interfere with your very natural desire? Suppose this engagement led to a prolonged residence abroad, and the consequent relief of her father from the cost and trouble of her maintenance, he would not, I presume, make any opposition? He would leave correspondence to *you*?"

"I should take care of that," said Mrs. Acland with a peculiar gleam in her eyes.

"I ask, because some of the party intend sojourning on the Continent, and taking Miss Acland with them."

"So Mrs. Morrison mentioned. I think such an arrangement might be very satisfactory, especially if *you*, a relative, know that these are thoroughly respectable people—that her protectors *or* protector, would be kind and considerate."

"Of that I am quite sure. Then Miss Acland goes to Mrs. Morrison with full permission to make what arrangement she likes as to her remaining with the family during their proposed residence abroad?"

"Yes, I think you may consider her perfectly free."

Mrs. Acland's eyes met those of Ellis, and they looked at each other in expressive silence.

Then Mrs. Acland turned hers away and said with a slight smile, "I suppose it is not improbable you may see Marjory occasionally when abroad?"

"Far from improbable," returned Ellis emphatically.

"That is a great relief to my mind."

"When does Miss Acland start for the North?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"And travels alone, I presume?"

"She does; she must learn to take care of herself, as she voluntarily abandons her—her home."

"I have no doubt she will find some one able and willing to take care of her," replied Ellis, rising. "I fancy we perfectly understand each other's sincere desire to promote your step-daughter's

happiness. I shall not say good-bye, however; if you permit, and Miss Acland is disposed to accept the proposition, I will call to-morrow, and take her to see the studio of a friend of mine whose pictures are worth looking at. Is one o'clock too early?"

"Not at all," exclaimed Mrs. Acland readily. "You are very good to trouble about Marjory; it will cheer her up to go out with you, for I expect she will be rather doleful after parting with her father, he is going away to-night."

"Going out of town? Ah, I hope he will have fine weather. Good morning, Mrs. Acland."

* * * * *

Marjory was considerably surprised, and more agitated than she cared to admit even to herself, when Mrs. Acland informed her of Ellis's invitation to visit his friend's studio. He had not given her up yet; it was, on the whole, comforting to know there was *one* person who thought of her; she at once determined to accompany him and hear what he had to say.

"Mr. Ellis seems to take an interest in you, Marjory," said Mrs. Acland. "He knows something of these Morrisons, and says they are very good sort of people."

"That is fortunate," said Marjory; "I will go and finish my packing, so as to be free to-morrow, but you will be sure to call me down before my father goes."

"Yes, of course."

Mr. Acland came back early, in order to take a hasty dinner before starting. He found everything in readiness, and his wife awaiting him in a state of the most amiable solicitude about his comfort, and regret for the fatigue a night journey would entail.

They had some pleasant confidential talk as she ministered to his wants at dinner, and she assured him she had made the most careful inquiries respecting the character of the lady to whom Marjory was going, and that everything was satisfactory; but somehow she omitted to mention the visit she had had from Ellis.

At last Marjory's intently-listening ears caught the sound of the nursery bell, and she ran down-stairs rapidly, distancing Louise and Herbert, who were also descending.

Mr. Acland was standing in the hall in his over-coat, his wife held his hat and woollen scarf, Sarah had just taken up his port-manteau and was carrying it through the door; Marjory's heart was very full.

"I shall not see you again, my dear father," she cried, throwing her arms round his neck and bursting into tears, "not for a long, long time! Are you sorry to let me go? Will you answer if I write to you? Do you care a little—a very little for me?"

If Mr. Acland was touched by this impetuous appeal he, no doubt, thought it wiser to conceal his feelings.

"You ought not to put such a question," he said testily. "The best proof of your affection will be to control your temper and

learn common sense ; of course I have a proper regard for all my children ; I am too busy a man to be a correspondent, but I shall always answer you in any matter of importance ; be wise and cultivate kindly relations with—with your excellent step-mother, and—I am somewhat pressed for time !” He pushed her gently away, saying, “Good-bye, Marjory, cultivate self-control ;” then he held out his arms to the younger ones, “Come, my little darlings,” he cried, “come, kiss father, he will not see your bright faces to-morrow.”

Marjory stood for an instant as if petrified, then catching sight of a somewhat peculiar smile on Mrs. Acland’s face, she turned and fled away to her own room, with a sore and bleeding heart.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DIE IS CAST.

WHEN Ellis reached Falkland Terrace next morning he was received by Mrs. Acland alone. He cast a quick questioning glance round the room, which did not escape her notice.

“Marjory will be here directly,” she said with a soothing smile. “She has gone to put on her hat. I assure you I feel quite obliged to you for taking her out this morning ; she is in the doleful dumps because her father was not in sufficient agonies of grief at parting with her last night ; you would not imagine Marjory a sentimentalist.”

“I do not pretend to fathom the depths of Miss Acland’s character,” returned Ellis abruptly and conscious of an inclination to snub the speaker, to whom he felt a decided dislike, “but at her age the emotions are generally strong, and no doubt she felt it might be a long time before she would see her father again.”

“How long, is probably better known to *you* than to me,” said Mrs. Acland with a bold peculiar look.

“What a she-devil,” thought Ellis. “She would send that poor child to any fate provided she got rid of her,” and while he thought Marjory came in.

She had put on her new dress and hat to do honour to the future ambassador, and the prevailing colour, deep red toned down with black, suited her well ; she looked pale, paler than Ellis ever saw her before, her eyes seemed larger than usual and had a distressed expression, but her manner was composed and still ; she showed none of the flitting blushes and shy impetuosity which had at first attracted him.

“You are very kind to come for me,” she said in a low but distinct voice as soon as they had greeted each other. “I should like to see your friend’s pictures. I am quite ready.”

“Let us go then. I wish you good morning, Mrs. Acland, and

good-bye, as I leave town almost immediately and shall not have the pleasure of seeing you again."

"I daresay not," said Mrs. Acland with a cordial smile. "I suppose, Marjory, I may expect you when I see you! Mr. Ellis will take good care of you."

Marjory made no reply, and followed by Ellis, went silently down-stairs.

As soon as they were out of doors he hailed a hansom, and they rolled rapidly away towards his friend's studio in Kensington.

"You are unhappy?" said Ellis.

"I generally am, but do not speak of it now, or I shall not be fit to be seen when we arrive."

"After you have looked at Vigors' pictures I have a good deal to say to you, till then we will talk of something else," and he went on to describe, lightly and amusingly, how he became acquainted with the painter they were going to see, hoping to divert his companion's thoughts till they reached their destination.

Even the unusual circumstance of paying a visit under the escort of Ellis did not disturb Marjory on this memorable occasion. Her mind appeared to be pre-occupied, to the exclusion of the present; still the studio, with its draperies, its bits of art pottery, and armour, curious weapons, and a few pieces of Venetian glass, surprised and delighted her, though it was simple enough, compared to the costly sanctums of more successful and established artists.

"I have brought a young cousin of mine to see you and your works," said Ellis; "she is very fond of pretty things, and I want to cultivate her taste for art."

"I am much flattered that you should think my poor studio worth a visit," said the artist with a low bow, as he laid aside his palette. "I haven't much to show you at present, having not yet had any of my pictures back from the provincial exhibitions; indeed I hope not to see them again."

He was a short, broad man with wild red hair and huge moustaches.

"What a lovely place!" cried Marjory, carried out of herself as she looked round. "It is like getting into another world to come here."

Then Vigors began to display his pictures, and entered into a discussion of the subject on which he was then working, and the best mode of treating it; then they talked of events and people all strange to Marjory, while she went softly to and fro, gazing her fill, and now and then asking a few questions.

The artist was evidently interested by her intelligent ignorance, if such an expression be permitted, and admired her too, Ellis perceived.

"Does Miss Acland live in London?" he said at length. "For if she is within reach, I should be tempted to ask a great—an enormous favour."

"From me?" returned Marjory.

"Yes, I would implore a few sittings; Miss Acland," turning to Ellis, "has exactly the face, the expression, the *tout ensemble*, I want for a picture I am thinking of, a scene from the 'Vicar of Wakefield,' Olivia and the Squire in the Vicarage Garden."

There was an instant's silence. Ellis knit his brows. Marjory flushed up to the roots of her hair, and then grew paler than before.

"I leave London to-morrow," she said, and then became quite silent.

Soon Ellis declared that they had kept Mr. Vigors long enough from his work, and in taking leave observed, "If you will allow me, I will show Miss Acland that wonderful head of a monk you picked up at Sienna. It is in the dining-room, I think; do not trouble to come, I know my way, and we need disturb you no longer."

To this the artist agreed so readily that a more experienced person than Marjory might have suspected mutual understanding.

"This way," said Ellis, leading her up a narrow dark stair to a comfortable, mellow-looking room, smelling strongly of tobacco. The light of the declining sun struck strong and golden on a striking picture of an emaciated head in a monk's cowl.

"Stand here, you will see better," said Ellis, closing the door. "Now you have seen it I want all your attention myself; no one will interrupt us here. I have thought and schemed for this interview; it must be final and decisive." He drew forward a large easy chair in which Marjory obediently sat down, her eyes fixed on him with an expression, half fear, half expectancy; she made no reply.

"I said you seemed unhappy," he continued, taking his place on a low ottoman beside her. "Will you not tell me if anything fresh has occurred to distress you?"

"Nothing very unusual," returned Marjory slowly, "only I have been foolish enough to take it to heart, or rather it seems to have stilled my heart and made it stronger. You know I have found an engagement in Scotland?"

"So Mrs. Acland told me."

"I start to-morrow morning all alone, and when my father was going away last night I thought I *must* hug him, and get him to say he loved me, and was sorry to let me go. I forgot Mrs. Acland—forgot there was any one looking on—and threw my arms round his neck sobbing like—like a fool; but it was no use. He turned from me to caress Louise and Herbert. I do not grudge his love to them, poor things, but—but he might have a *little* for *me*!" Ellis silently took her hand, which she left in his grasp.

"Take *my* love instead," he murmured.

"But one's father—one's own father! It is too terrible to lose his love because a stranger has come between you. However, I have given him up, I must learn to be self-sufficing."

"Now hear me, Marjory," began Ellis, still holding her hand. "Your father has deliberately thrown you over; there is now no

duty, no home ties to separate us; can you hesitate in choosing between a life of mental and emotional starvation as an ill-paid governess, and a life of warmth, and appreciation, of sympathy, if for a while of obscurity, with *me*? Be brave at this turning-point of both our lives, be my wife."

Marjory did not answer immediately, there was a far-away look in her eyes, then turning to him she said quickly, distinctly—

"I *will*!"

Ellis kissed her hand.

"Well said!" he exclaimed in a tone of exultation. "My love, my own, you give me new life." Marjory was surprised and touched to see how his usually hard face softened and lit up. "How much you might have spared yourself had you come to this decision sooner." Yet though gazing at her with passionate delight, Ellis did not resist the movement by which she drew away her hand. "Let me explain my plans to you, though I can scarce think clearly, in the flood of happiness which has burst upon me."

"Listen to *me* first," said Marjory, still pale and with a quiver in her voice that bespoke how much she felt. "I *cannot* break away suddenly from the engagement I have just made. I *must* go to Scotland after awhile."

"Yes," interrupted Ellis, an amused smile glittering in his deep-set dark eyes, "you certainly must go to Scotland, you must fulfil your engagement. Just hear me, and credit me with some ingenuity. You told me you were going to advertise in the *Times*. I went away to my shooting-quarters and steadily searched the columns headed 'Want Situations,' till I found a little announcement that such and such an appointment was required by 'M. A.,' replies to be addressed to a street I knew was near your house. This I answered, to find out if I were right or not."

"You?" ejaculated Marjory.

"I saw," continued Ellis, "in your intention to leave home my—may I say *our*—best chance? Your reply enabled me to prepare for my grand *coup*; in short, the letters were *mine*, and you engaged yourself to *me*. Having arranged matters so far, I hurried to town to make a last desperate effort to throw myself on your mercy—mercy for yourself as well as for me. If you accepted me at last, the way was clear, you would come with me to Strathlogan, where on our arrival we should be united by the simple uncereemonious ceremony, if I may so express myself, which performed in Scotland is perfectly binding. Then, as announced in Mrs. Morrison's letter, we could go to Edinburgh for a few days; from Edinburgh you could write to your step-mother that you were going to Paris, and arrived there you could give an address where letters would find you. It does not seem to me that you would be troubled with many. Gradually your father would grow accustomed to hear very little of you, and so time would pass until the

day I so ardently long for, when we should return together and stand before the world as man and wife."

"What an extraordinary plan. Did you take *all* this trouble for me?"

"Does it seem strange to you? It is simple enough to me."

"Then really I am not engaged, and there is no Mrs. Morrison."

"You are engaged to *me*! But there *is* a Mrs. Morrison; she is my very excellent landlady. She is unaware that I have used her name, but she is quite prepared to receive a young lady who is to be married to me under her roof, and is full of sympathy."

"It is too dreadful," said Marjory, as if to herself. "What would George and Dick say?"

"That it is better for you to accept the warm devotion of a man who loves you than endure a desolate life with your step-mother. Remember, too, there is no escape from it, at least no immediate escape, save with me! I am your pupil, your lover, your protector—as to these brothers of yours, they may be the best fellows on earth, but they will have their own loves, their own ties, and you will be secondary; to *me* you will be ever first."

"I am indeed alone," said Marjory, trembling visibly. "There seems no hope for me, but with you."

"Why does the idea of marriage with me terrify you, Marjory? You fill me with despair when you shrink and tremble. Remember, my every hope is bound up in you."

"It is the concealment I dread. The immense falsehood of the whole thing. I am deceiving every one, I seem leaving light and honesty behind me to hide under the shadow of shame."

"You are not deceiving any one. *I* may be—I daresay I am. But all will be forgiven, if it needs forgiveness, when we can avow ourselves. My love, my fortunes are yours. It is as much for your sake as my own that I wish to conceal our marriage. I could not endure to think of all you would undergo if I left you in the claws of that harpy!"

He continued to plead, to reason, to enlarge on the miseries and wrongs she had endured. But more than all his subtle arguments, the bitterness of remaining at home after all was settled for her escape on the morrow, the conviction that she was virtually separated from George and Dick influenced Marjory, and when Ellis ceased to speak she sighed deeply, and said, "You do not convince my reason; yet I will go with you, I cannot stay in my father's house! I do not deserve that you should care so much for me, and take so much trouble for my sake. But if I marry you I *will* love you! Oh, it is cruel to be indifferent to one who gives you his heart. How it cut me to the soul when my father turned from me, and you seem to love me more than I do him." She smiled with inexpressible frank sweetness.

"Yes, my own, my love," cried Ellis, an intoxicating sense of triumph and delight, stealing over him. "I know you will be ten-

der and true! Do not say, *if* I marry you! The hour you join me settles that '*if*,' and makes marriage a positive necessity."

"Is it not growing late?" asked Marjory, who began to feel the need of solitude and reflection, a nervous dread of being questioned, if she delayed too long.

"I am afraid it is," said Ellis, looking at his watch. "I have some affairs to attend to before evening, so I fear I must take you back."

They exchanged a few sentences respecting their meeting at the station next morning, Marjory entreating him not to show himself until he ascertained if Mrs. Acland had thought fit to accompany her. Ellis smiled at the idea of *her* putting any obstacle in the way, but was wisely silent as to his conjectures.

"Was it not strange," she said, as they stood exchanging last words, "your friend, Mr. Vigors, thinking of me as a model for Olivia? It seemed a bad omen."

"He is an idiot," sharply. "Do you think I could ever be a villain like the squire?"

"Ah, no! I must think you everything that is good *now*." There was a slight melancholy cadence in her voice that touched him deeply.

"Dearest, try to anticipate nothing but good; your lot shall be a fair one, if it is in the power of mortal man to make it so. Say good-bye to me here."

He caught both her hands and drew her towards him trying to raise her arms to his neck. Marjory shrunk back with a startled look which warned Ellis. He instantly released her.

"There!" he exclaimed, "you are free, not even were I your husband would I insist on a kiss you were not willing to give; you will love me yet, when I have had a chance of winning you. Come, let me see you safely to your prison house, this will be our last parting, I trust."

* * * * *

Ellis returned exultant to his hotel. He had never taken so much trouble about anything in his life; his passions, affections, taste had never before been so strongly stimulated. The harder crust of his nature had been effectually pierced, and above all the difficulties of his pursuit, the original fearless dislike, toning down to indifference, of its object, only increased his determination to succeed. Ellis was both resolute and patient, and generally gained the ends at which he aimed. His love for Marjory was sincere enough, nor altogether unworthy her acceptance, but it would not stand an hour before the claims of ambition. At present he fully intended to be her faithful husband, but he liked to think that the period during which the marriage was to be concealed was at his option, that he was master of Marjory's fate, that she might exist (happily he hoped) for years, to give a secret charm to his life. Even if the father came to know of the connection, he could be easily persuaded to keep quiet for the sake of his

daughter's interest, but he hoped matters might be kept dark from him. Perhaps Ellis may by some almost unconscious cerebration have felt the foreshadow of distant possibilities, when increased or complete concealment instead of open avowal of his marriage might be necessary. Well, all that was very dim and remote, while the present was full of success, good intentions and heavenly anticipations.

On her side, Marjory entered her father's house, probably for the last time, in a state of much agitation, though she managed to suppress its outward evidence.

"Where is Mrs. Acland?" was her first question, with a view to avoiding that lady's presence.

"She has not come in yet and there is a letter for you, miss." Marjory seized it with mixed feelings. It was from Dick. When, before, was a letter from him anything but simply welcome?

"I have only time for a few words; Brand wrote to me last week that he is too ill to go on with his work, so I started as soon as I could to do it for him. Mr. Jervis agreed to my going when I explained matters. Be sure you write to me here and tell me all about yourself and how you get on. I shall be here some weeks,

"Your affectionate brother,

"DICK CRANSTON."

This letter bore the address: 17, Dublin Street, Edinburgh.

The hand which held the letter dropped to her side as she came to the end. "Tell him all about herself; should she ever be able to do so again? If she were true to the man who was to be her husband she must break off from all communication with her dear and only friends, or throw them off the scent by a series of falsehoods and deceit, the mere thought of which made her pale cheeks burn. Then, though George, kind, light-hearted George, might be kept out of the way by his profession, she feared that Dick, who was a free agent and might lead a wandering life, would find her out; and if he also found that she had *lied* to him, how he would despise her.

Yet *how* could she escape? she could *not* draw back. How could she tell Mrs. Acland that she would not go to Scotland the next morning? Above all, how could she disappoint Ellis, who seemed so alarmingly fond of her? *Why*, she could not understand. No, she must go through with her desperate undertaking *now*, and perhaps all would turn out for the best. It would be so delightful to see Paris, and with such a companion, for certainly Mr. Ellis could be delightful, and *so* clever, rather too clever she feared, as she thought of his unscrupulous and daring scheme.

After all, no one else ever cared so much about her. Her chums, George and Dick, though kind and true, would, as he said, find their own loves and give her but slight consideration; she thrust the letter into the depths of her pocket, and went to take off her

hat and assume as composed and indifferent an air as she could. How strange that last evening seemed ! Mrs. Acland was wonderfully quiet and civil ; she asked if the pictures were well worth seeing, and remarked that Mr. Ellis was a distinguished-looking man. Then Marjory begged to be allowed to put Louise to bed ; she was amazed to feel parting with the bright, troublesome little creature so keenly ; should she never, never see her again ?

When she returned to the dining-room Mrs. Acland was over her accounts ; Marjory sat down without speaking and kept quite still.

How cruel it was to have no one near to speak a friendly, sympathetic word to her, on the eve of this tremendous change in her existence ; she felt it almost impossible to restrain the hysterical tears which were ready to burst forth ; she tried to steady herself to say good-night and get away to the solitude of her garret. Mrs. Acland suddenly startled her into self-possession by asking, in a hard, matter-of-fact tone, "Have you any money, Marjory ?"

"Very little." Marjory was determined not to say how much she had saved from her necessary purchases.

"Well, your father told me to give you a couple of pounds for your travelling expenses ; of course, after starting you fairly he expects you to maintain yourself."

"I hope to be able to do so," said Marjory calmly.

"There are two sovereigns and a half ; you will want cab fares." Mrs. Acland rose, and coming over to the table placed the money beside her. "I have no doubt you will get on very well ; send a card to announce your safe arrival, and then you can wait and see what the place is like before you write again. What train do you go by in the morning ?"

"The 10 A.M. from King's Cross."

"Then you must start at 9.30, and as the mornings are sharp now, I do not think I shall see you off ; you can take care of yourself."

"Certainly, there is no need whatever for you to come."

"I fancy not," said Mrs. Acland in a peculiar tone, but Marjory was too much taken up with her own painful anxieties to heed, so with a hasty good-night she went away to try and rest, if not to sleep.

* * * * *

No amount of bathing in Lethean waters could ever wash away the painful impression that early morning drive to King's Cross left on Marjory's memory ; the fever of nervous anticipation, the cold fits of terror at the idea of crossing the Rubicon, for once started in the train with Ellis, there could be no retreat ; she dared not dream of drawing back, she was completely committed. If at the last moment some way of escape had offered itself, Marjory felt she would have seized it. Knowing there was none, she struggled to hope the best, to be just and trustful to the man who would be her husband to-morrow. He seemed so fond of her that he deserved her gratitude. If only she had not to steal

in such a thievish way into the bonds of holy wedlock, she did not think she would mind marrying Mr. Ellis (he was still "Mr. Ellis" in her thoughts), but when she was with him he always exercised a curious disturbing influence over her, half fear, half attraction. Now she must put away all doubt and fear, and try to look on him as one with herself.

Marjory had a strong and generous instinct of justice to others and felt that she ought not to vex Ellis by looking or seeming miserable.

At last the wretched drive was over, and Marjory, with desperate courage, alighted and paid the driver.

"Your train goes in a quarter of an hour," said a porter, taking her box, and reading the address.

Marjory was following him to the ticket-office, when Ellis suddenly appeared at her elbow. "Thank heaven you are alone!" he said, drawing her hand through his arm, "you are awfully cold. There is a good fire in the ladies' room, and I will come for you when I have secured a carriage. That's your luggage, is it not?"

In an instant all trouble, all necessity for thought, was lifted from her.

Ellis established her by the fire, and with a few tender words left her feeling somewhat comforted. She had not spoken, she had only returned slightly the pressure of his hand.

After an age of waiting (*i.e.*, about ten minutes), Ellis reappeared, and led Marjory quickly to a first-class carriage, of which he seemed to have taken possession. It was supplied with foot-warmers; plaids, rugs, wraps, books, newspapers, and a travelling bag lay scattered on the seats. Having placed his companion in the seat furthest from the door and covered her carefully with a large plaid, Ellis descended again, and Marjory heard him talking to a polite deferential guard, and then to a well-dressed respectable looking man to whom he seemed, from the words which caught Marjory's ear, to be giving various directions. She was struck by the cold command of his tones; they made her shiver with a sudden unaccountable dread of future possibilities. The next moment Ellis sprang into the carriage, the whistle sounded, and they were away on their journey—a life journey!

"At last, my darling!" cried Ellis, his voice so changed by the ring of joy and tenderness softening it, that Marjory could hardly believe it was the same she had heard a moment before, "at last. I have you safely extricated from the claws of your step-mother. It is an awful trial for you this long journey; you are looking white and weary already; give me your hand, no, your left hand." He proceeded to unfasten and draw off her glove, and put on the third finger a brilliant diamond and ruby ring. "Even for a few hours you must wear this as the '*locum tenens*' of the plain gold one to which this will be the guard."

"It is splendid!" said Marjory, with genuine admiration, "I never had anything half so beautiful before." Then Ellis, touched

by the tremulous agitation which she tried to control and conceal, began to talk, in quiet but joyous accents, of his plans, of all that he longed to show her, of the mode of life which they would lead, of their future intercourse with George, leading her thoughts from the oppressive present to a bright future. Marjory lent herself willingly to his efforts; she longed to throw off the load which oppressed her; she was ashamed of her own fears and ingratitude, ashamed to show the terrible shame she felt at thus leaving her father's house with a comparative stranger, to live with him in secret, even though his wife.

So she forced herself to look out of the window and remark upon the scenery, to ask a few questions about foreign countries, to tell a few droll instances of her father's subjection to his wife. But the experienced man of the world who sat beside her saw through, and thoroughly appreciated her effort to control her own fears and emotions. He kept himself well in hand, determined not to disturb or alarm her by any attempted caresses, much as he longed to hold her in his arms and kiss the sweet mouth which quivered now and then, even as it smiled.

"I suppose you know something of Scotch marriages?" asked Ellis, as they left Peterborough. He had wanted to come round to this subject for some time, as he did not know exactly what sort of ceremony Marjory expected.

"Not much. They used to be performed by a blacksmith, did they not?"

"Not invariably," said Ellis laughing, "nor shall I bring one to forge your fetters, my darling. That was in the Gretna Green days. A Scotch marriage is as legal and binding if celebrated in a house as in a church or a registry office; the chief thing is to have two witnesses, which I have been careful to provide."

"And suppose they both die in a few years; shall we be able to run away from each other?" asked Marjory, trying to cheer up and speak lightly.

"I shall certainly not try, and I don't fancy *you* would seek to burst your bonds, even if I prove a bore. I have the fullest faith in you, more than you can say to me. Eh, Marjory?"

"I think I prove my faith in you by being here," she returned, with a quick sigh.

"I am afraid it proves still more, that you had a most unhappy, unbearable home. How could any man be indifferent to such a daughter as you are?" and Ellis went on with many a tender and loverlike speech, which helped to soothe and cheer Marjory, at any rate while he spoke.

As evening closed in, however, her spirits sank, and endless doubts and terrors arose in the dimness of a dull autumnal gloaming.

After passing Newcastle, she began to feel excessively weary from the mental strain and bodily fatigue of the last few days.

Ellis observed that she was growing very still and silent. He

had insisted on her taking some wine at York, but she could not eat a morsel. He was touched and impressed by the courage and spirit she showed in so trying a position. He knew her heart was sinking within her, but having promised to be his, she was trying to give as little trouble as possible.

"She will develop into a very plucky capable woman, but by that time I shall have established complete control over her; besides she is too unselfish to injure me in any way. Yes, I think I have secured a charming and malleable companion."

"You seem very tired, dearest. Will you not rest your head against my shoulder, and let me support you with my arm?"

"Oh, I am quite comfortable in this corner, I would rather stay here."

"Little prude! In a few hours we shall be man and wife."

"It is not that—it is—that I should rather stay here."

"Very well, you do exactly as you like; let me put this plaid round you, it is growing cold."

A long spell of silence, spent by Ellis in agreeable thoughts, in self-gratulations on his successful scheming, on the safety and secrecy he had insured in planning the routine of his life for the next year or two. Marjory seemed to sleep; she had removed her hat and thrown a soft, white woollen scarf over her head; her auburn brown curls in some confusion escaped from under it; she was very pale, but her lips were red, and the long dark brown lashes which lay on her cheek looked black against its whiteness. How young and fair she looked in the faint glimmer of the lamp; she was infinitely charming, bright, variable, self-asserting without obstinacy, and best of all, obscure. No one would trouble much about her, and he could have his own way pretty well in the development of their future.

"Where are we?" cried Marjory, waking up with a sudden start and look of terror. "I have slept hours." She unconsciously grasped her companion's hand.

"Not so long as you imagine; we shall soon be at our journey's end, thank God."

"Mr. Ellis," with feverish solemnity, "before it is too late, do, do think if you are sacrificing your future to a mere whim, sacrificing me too, if your feeling for me is not very deep indeed."

"I never indulge in whims, I have none to indulge," returned Ellis, very gravely, pressing her hands in both his. "It is too late to draw back, Marjory, for your own sake you *must* marry me now."

"There is no must in it."

"Inexperienced as you are, Marjory, a moment's thought will show that you have put yourself in my hands; it would be destruction to leave me now. My darling! you have had a bad dream. Do not anticipate evil; this day three or four months hence, you will laugh and wonder you ever hesitated."

(To be continued.)

THE BUNYIP.

By MRS. CAMPBELL PRAED.

EVERY ONE who has lived in Australia has heard of the Bunyip. It is the one respectable flesh-curdling horror of which Australia can boast. The old world has her tales of ghouls and vampires, of Lorelei, spook and pixie, but Australia has nothing but her Bunyip. There never were any fauns in the eucalyptus forests, nor any naiads in the running creeks. No mythological hero left behind him stories of wonder and enchantment. No white man's hand has carved records of a poetic past on the grey volcanic-looking boulders that overshadow some lonely gullies which I know. There are no sepulchres hewn in the mountain rampart surrounding a certain dried up lake—probably the crater of an extinct volcano—familiar to my childhood, and which in truth suggests possibilities of a forgotten city of Kôr. Nature and civilization have been very niggard here in all that makes romance.

No Australian traveller ever saw the Bunyip with his own eyes; and though there are many stockman's yarns and Black's *patters*, which have to do with this wonderful monster, they have all the hazy uncertainty which usually envelops information of the legendary kind. Some night perhaps, when you are sitting over a camp fire brewing quart-pot tea and smoking store-tobacco, with the spectral white gums rising like an army of ghosts around you, and the horses' hobbles clanking cheerfully in the distance, you will ask one of the overlanding hands to tell you what he knows about the Bunyip. The bushman will warm to his subject as readily as an Irishman to his banshee. He will indignantly repel your insinuation, that the Bunyip may be after all as mythical as Alice's Jabberwock; and he will forthwith proceed to relate how a friend of his had a mate, who knew another chap, who had once in his life had a narrow escape from the Bunyip, and had actually beheld it—and in a certain lagoon not a hundred miles from where you are squatting. He himself has never set eyes upon the Bunyip, nor has his mate, but there is not the smallest doubt that the other chap has seen it. When facts come to be boiled down, however, "the other chap's" statements will seem curiously vague and contradictory; and if the details are to be accepted as they stand, a remarkable contribution to natural history must be the result.

The Bunyip is the Australian sea-serpent, only it differs from that much disputed fact or fiction in that it does not inhabit the ocean, but makes its home in lagoons and still deep water-holes. For rivers and running creeks, it appears to have an aversion. No black fellow will object to bathe in a river because of the Bunyip, but he will shake his woolly head mysteriously over many an innocent-looking water-hole, and decline to dive for water-lily roots or some such delicacy dear to the aboriginal stomach, on the plea that "Debil-debil sit down there."

Debil-debil and Bunyip are synonymous terms with the black-fellow while he is on the bank of a lagoon, though "Debil-debil" in the abstract represents a much more indefinite source of danger, and has a far wider scope of action than most mythological deities. "Debil-debil" is a convenient way of accounting, not only for plague, sickness, and disaster, but also for peace, plenty and good fortune. According to the religious code of the Australian aboriginal, Ormuzd and Ahriman do not work at opposite poles, but combine and concentrate themselves under one symbol. The supremacy of Debil-debil is uncontested, and he deals out promiscuously benefits and calamities from the same hand. A medicine man professing to be in confidential communication with Debil-debil, may kill or cure a black fellow according to his pleasure. The natives have a superstition, in common with many primitive nations, that if an enemy possesses himself of a lock of hair from the head of one to whom he wishes ill, and buries it in the ground beneath a gum tree, the despoiled person will sicken and die as the hair rots away. In that case, Debil-debil must be "pialla-ed" (entreated) by the sick person to unbury the hair and cast it in the fire, when the charm will be dissolved. The medicine man, therefore, has but to assure his patient that Debil-debil has refused or acceded to his request, and death or speedy recovery will be the consequence.

The blacks have an impish drollery and love of mischief, and they delight in imposing on the credulity of their white auditors. Thus the stories of their superstitions must not be accepted too literally. But it is certain that when they show a distinct reticence in regard to any reputed article of faith, it may safely be looked upon as genuine. The blacks never will volunteer information about the Bunyip; it has always to be dragged out of them. When a black fellow disappears, it is generally understood that the Bunyip has got hold of him, and the particular water-hole in which the monster is supposed to live becomes more than ever an object of terror and a place to be avoided. The water-hole may have been hitherto uncondemned by tradition, and the blacks may choose to disport themselves in it; but if one of them, seized with cramp or enmeshed in weeds, sinks to rise no more, the terrible cry of "Bunyip" goes forth and those waters are from henceforth shunned.

The Bunyip is said to be an amphibious animal and is variously described, sometimes as a gigantic snake, sometimes as a species of rhinoceros, with a smooth pulpy skin and a head like that of a calf, sometimes as a huge pig, its body yellow crossed with black stripes. But it is also said to be something more than animal, and among its supernatural attributes are the cold, awesome, uncanny feeling which creeps over a company at night when the Bunyip becomes the subject of conversation; and a certain magnetic atmosphere supposed to envelop the creature and to spread a deadly influence for some space around, rendering even its vicinity dangerous, is particularly dwelt upon. According to legend it attracts its prey by means of this mysterious emanation, and when sufficiently near, will draw man or beast down to the water and suck the body under, and without sound or struggle the victim disappears to be seen no more. It is silent and stealthy and only very rarely they say, and always at night, has been seen to rise partially from the black water which it loves, and utter a strange moaning cry like that of a child or a woman in pain. There is a theory that water is a powerful conductor for the kind of electricity it gives out, and that a pool with dry abrupt banks and no outlying morass is tolerably safe to drink from or to camp by; but a lagoon lying amid swamp has always an evil reputation, and in some districts it is very difficult to persuade a black fellow to venture into such a place.

One of the most famous haunts of the Bunyip, round which all sorts of stories gathered, though I never could really authenticate one of them, is a lagoon that we all knew well and which used to furnish my brothers with many a brace of wild fowl for our bush larder.

This lagoon is about four miles long, in some parts very deep, in others nothing but marsh, with swamp-oaks and ti-trees and ghostly white-barked she-oaks growing thickly in the shallow water. The wild duck is so numerous in places that a gun fired makes the air black, and it is impossible to hear oneself speak, so deafening are the shrill cries of the birds which brood over the swamp.

We were none of us very much afraid of the Bunyip, though I confess to many an anxious shudder, and to having stopped and switched a stick behind me in order to make sure that all was right, when I found myself at dusk walking by the banks of the lagoon. A curious fascination which was assuredly not the magnetic attraction of the Bunyip used to draw me there; the place was so wild and eerie and solitary and appealed so strongly to my imagination. I liked nothing better than to go with my brother on moonlight nights when he went down there with his gun over his shoulder to get a shot at wild duck; the creepy feeling which would come over us as we trod along by the black water with dark slimy logs slanting into it, and reeds and moist

twigs and fat marsh plants giving way under our footsteps, was quite a luxurious terror. There were such strange noises, the faint shivering sound made by the spiky leaves of the swamp-oak, the flapping of the she-oaks' scaly bark, the queer gurgling "grrur-urr-r" of an opossum up a gum tree, the swishing of the ducks' wings when they rose suddenly in the distance, the melancholy call of the curlews—all these breaking the silence and loneliness of the night, were indescribably uncanny and fascinating; but I am bound to say that during these expeditions we never saw a sign of the Bunyip.

We were travelling once up country—my brother Jo and I—and had arranged to camp out one night, there being no station or house of accommodation on the stage at which we could put up. The dray, loaded with stores and furniture for the new home to which we were bound, had been started some days previously, and we had agreed to meet the drivers at a certain small lagoon, known as the One-eyed Water-hole, and camp there under the dray tarpaulin. We were riding, my brother driving a pair of pack-horses with our swags, and we were unable to carry any convenience for spending a night in the bush.

It was the month of November and the heat was overpowering. The red gum oozed from the iron bark trees and fell in great drops like blood. The deafening noise of the forest was in strange contrast to the night silence and loneliness of the lagoon I have described. All the sounds were harsh and grating—the whirring of grasshoppers and locusts, the chattering of parrots and laughing-jackasses, the cawing of cockatoos and scuttling of iguanas through the coarse dry blady grass. It was a relief to the heat and monotony when, as the sun set, we left the timbered ridges and came down upon a plain, across which a faint breeze blew and where we could see, at the foot of a distant ridge, the One-eyed Water-hole and our dray beside it, loaded high and covered with a huge tarpaulin that hung all round it like a tent.

The men were busy making a fire and watering the bullocks. They had got down their blankets and the rations and tin billys and quart pots from the dray, and Mick, who had been hut-keeper to a party of shearers, was mixing Johnny-cakes on a piece of newly-cut bark, ready for baking when the logs had burnt down into ashes and embers. Some of the others had cut tufts from the grass trees on the ridge and strewn them on the earth under the dray for us to lie upon. Very soon we were all comfortably camped, and as night closed in and the stars shone out, the scene became more and more picturesque. Our fire had been lighted a few yards away from the lagoon, which, deep and black where the banks were high, widened out at the lower end into a swamp of she-oaks, their white lanky stems standing out against the darker background of ridge, densely covered with jungle-like scrub.

We had eaten our meal of beef and hot Johnny-cakes all together by the dray, and there was something striking about the appearance of the men in their bright Crimean shirts and rough moleskin trousers and broad brimmed cabbage-tree hats as they lounged in easy attitudes smoking their pipes and drinking quart-pot tea, while they waxed communicative under the influence of a nip of grog, which had been served out to them apiece.

They were telling shearing stories—how Paddy Mack and Long Charlie had had a bet as to which could shear a sheep the fastest; how Father Flaherty, the priest from the township, who had come over to see the shearing in full swing, timed them by his watch; how at the word “off” the shears slashed down through the wool, and how the quickest man sheared his sheep in less than a minute, and the other a second and a half later. Then Mick had to tell of a man who used to shear his hundred and twenty sheep in the day and on his way from the wool-shed to the hut jump over a four foot six post and rail fence, which after having been bent double all day was a feat he might be proud of.

Then somehow—perhaps it was the wildness and loneliness of the place, or the wind across the plain, or the sighing of the she-oaks, or the weird “poomp” of the bullock bells—the talk got on to eerie things, and from the authentic story of Fisher’s Ghost it was an easy transition to the Bunyip and all its supernatural horrors. Most of the men had some Bunyip tale to relate; and as we talked a sort of chill seemed to creep over us, and one could almost fancy that the horrible monster was casting its magnetic spell upon us from the dark swamp close by. After a bit, when it was discovered that the billys were empty and that we wanted more water to make some fresh tea, no one seemed inclined to go down to the lagoon to fetch it, and Mick taking a firestick to light his pipe, said slowly:

“Begorra, Charlie, we must look out here for the Bunyip. You ask old Darby Magrath if he’d like to camp down by the swamp of the One-eyed Water-hole all night by himself. I remember Darby telling me that when he was riding across this plain one night after shearing, his horse stopped of a sudden and trembled all over under him—just like a bullock in the killing yard when you drop the spear into his neck—Darby says he felt cold all through his bones; and then a queer sort of noise came up from the water—a kind of sound like a baby moaning—and he just clapped spurs into his old yarraman (horse), and never pulled up out of a gallop till he had got over the range and was at the ‘Coffin Lid’ public five miles on. The horse was all dripping with sweat, and poor old Darby as white as a corpse.”

“Well, I don’t know much about the thing myself—never had no Bunyip experiences myself; but unless Gemmel Dick is *the*

most almighty liar——” began Long Charlie, taking out his pipe in preparation for a blood-curdling yarn and then stopping suddenly, for at that moment there came a curious sound from the lagoon, or the swamp, or the plains to our left—we could not tell whence—a wild thrilling sound which at first seemed scarcely human, but which when repeated after the interval of a moment or two, struck my heart as if it were the cry of some dying animal or of a child in dire distress and agony.

We all started and looked anxiously at each other, waiting until it came again, and not quite liking to confess our tremors, when one of the men exclaimed nervously :

“ Say. What’s that ? ”

“ Wallabi bogged,” pronounced Long Charlie oracularly, and, was beginning once more :

“ Well, as I was telling you. If Gemmel Dick ain’t *the* most——”

But that strange, horrible cry from the lagoon—yes, it must come from the swamp end of the lagoon—broke the night silence again, and stopped Long Charlie a second time. It was more prolonged, more certain, than it had been before. Beginning low, a sort of hoarse muffled groan, it swelled into a louder, shriller note, which we at once imagined might be the strained broken coo-ée of a child in pain or terror.

Every one of us rose.

“ By Jove ! I’ll tell you what I believe it is,” said my brother Jo excitedly. “ That’s some Free-selector’s kid lost in the bush. Come along, you fellows. Don’t be funky of the Bunyip.”

He darted down towards the swamp, which lay some little distance from our camp, the dark heads of the she-oaks rising above a thick veil of white mist, that shrouded completely the less lofty and more straggling branches of the ti-trees. The rest of us followed him closely. It must be said that we were not deterred at that moment by any thought of the Bunyip and its supernatural atmosphere. Long Charlie, the most practical of the party, waited to detach a rough lantern which hung from one of the staples of the dray and caught us up as we reached the borders of the swamp. The sound had ceased now. Coo-éeing loudly, we peered through the cold clinging mist among the brown twisted branches of the ti-trees, which shook their scented bottle-brush blossoms in our faces. Under our feet, the ground, which had been trodden into deep odd-shaped ruts by the cattle coming down to drink, gave way at every step. We could hear the soft “ k—sssh ” of the displaced water, and we shivered as the slimy ooze mounted over our insteps and trickled down through our boots, while the pulpy rushes sprang back as we forced ourselves through, and struck our hands with clammy touch.

It was a dreary uncanny place, and even through our coo-ée’s the night that had seemed so silent on the plain was here full of

ghostly noises, stifled hissings, and unexpected gurglings and rustlings, and husky croaks, and stealthy glidings and swishings.

"Look out for snakes," said Long Charlie, flourishing his lantern. "And don't all of us be coo-eeing all the time, or when the little chap sings out we shan't be able to hear him."

We stopped coo-eeing, and presently the wail sounded again, fainter and more despairing we fancied, and urging us to greater energy. Though we tried to move in the direction of the voice, it was impossible to determine whence it came, so misleading and fitful and will-o'-the-wisp-like was the sound. Now it seemed to come from our right, now from our left, now from the very depths of the lagoon, and now from the scrub on the ridge beyond.

I don't know how we got through the deeper part of the swamp without getting bogged; but we did at last, and reached the scrub that straggled down to the water's edge. Here was dense, and in places, impenetrable foliage, rough boulders were lying pell-mell at the foot of the ridge, and creepers hung in withes from the trees with great thorns that tore our hands and our clothes. We did not know which way to turn for the cry had ceased, and the dead silence of the scrub was like that of the grave. We waited for a minute or two, but it did not come again.

"I believe it was the Bunyip after all," said Mick with a shudder. "And look here, I shall head the lagoon, I ain't going to cross that swamp again. It's all nonsense about the little 'un, not a child nor a grown man or beast could have forced theirselves down here."

Long Charlie flashed his lantern along the wall of green, and stumbling over stones and logs we walked as well as we could, skirting the scrub and making for the head of the lagoon. We paused every now and then, straining our ears for the voice that had led us hither, and once it sounded faint but thrillingly plaintive and guided us on.

At last there came a break in the jungle, a narrow track piercing the heart of the scrub, and then a wider break and a warning cry from Long Charlie in advance.

"Hello! Look out! It's a gully—pretty deep. You might break a leg before you knew it. Keep along up the track."

We kept along up the track, waiting to let Long Charlie go first with his lantern. Suddenly the moon, which had risen while we were in the swamp, sent a shaft of light down through the opening, and showed us a little way ahead, where the track widened out and then stopped altogether, a tiny plateau, in the centre of which stood a great white bottle-tree, its trunk perfectly bare, bulging out in the centre like a garment swelled by the wind, and looking in its fantastic shape like a sentinel spectre.

It gave one a strange creepy feeling to see this huge white thing rising up so solemnly in the midst of the gloom and the solitude.

There was something else white on the grass—something almost the same shape as the bottle-tree lying across at its foot. The moon was dim for a moment or two. Nobody spoke, we pressed up the ridge side, then a hoarse smothered ejaculation burst from Long Charlie's lips, and as he spoke the moon shone forth again and he shifted his lantern so that its gleam fell athwart the white prostrate form and upon a snake, brown and shiny and scaly and horrible, which uncoiled itself, and with a swift, wavy motion disappeared into the depths of the scrub.

It seemed to us, we said afterwards, as though we could hear each other's hearts beating. The men were too horrified to utter a sound. At last Long Charlie said in a deep, awe-stricken voice :

“By God! That beats me.”

And then Mick, moving a little nearer, cried with a sob in his brawny throat :

“It's Nancy—little Nancy—Sam Duffy's girl from the ‘Coffin Lid.’ And it was only the other day she came out and served me with a nobbler.”

Paddy Mack was sobbing too, they all seemed to know and love the child.

“She wur so fond of looking for chuckie-chuckies in the scrub, and quantongs and things. And she might have knowed, poor little Nancy! that if she wanted quantongs, I'd have got 'em for her; and didn't I string her a necklace only last shearing! But she was always a child for roaming—she wasn't afraid of snakes, nor blacks, nor nothing—she said she liked to hear the bell-bird call, and that it seemed to be always calling *her*. I've heerd her say that—poor little Nancy—always smiling when she carried a chap out a nobbler. And now the bell-bird has rung her home.”

Long Charlie only said again, “That beats me.”

They couldn't account for it; the child had been dead some hours, they said. They couldn't believe it was that snake which had bitten her, and they declared that the cry we heard must have been the Bunyip, or little Nancy's ghost.

IN THE CITY'S HEART.

By CURTIS YORKE,

AUTHOR OF "THAT LITTLE GIRL," "WAS IT A MISTAKE?" ETC.

"And all they knew of London was its shadow."—*Bulwer Lytton.*

THE neighbourhood of Blackfriars Road is not a particularly pleasant locality, so far as I am aware. It is certainly neither a fashionable nor an aristocratic quarter of the great city. But on the other hand, neither is it expensive as regards lodgings and living in general; and it was on account of this last qualification that Dick Conyers and his little brother had lived there for the last two years. They occupied a couple of small top-story rooms in a dingy street (which I shall call Lark Street), somewhat back from the main thoroughfare; and they were evidently not too well off, even by the Lark Street standard, which was not high. They seemed to have no friends; certainly they had no visitors, and but few letters; but Dick and Robin wanted no other companionship while they had each other, apparently, in spite of the great difference in their ages. Robin was a slimly-built little fellow, shrewd and thoughtful far beyond his years, which as yet numbered but seven. He had small pale features, with bright questioning grey eyes, and thick fair hair, which seemed to spring from a deep central whirlpool on the top of his compact little head, and hung evenly down all round. Between Dick and Robin there were fifteen years. In other words, Dick was twenty-two. He had a kind, manly face, with heavily-lashed grey eyes some shades darker than Robin's. It was a clever face, too, with a scornful look about the mouth at times, which curiously belied the deep, earnest eyes. Robin thought him the finest-looking fellow in the world. Certainly he compared more than favourably with the other inhabitants of Lark Street, which was Robin's world in the meantime. But then, as Dick's landlady, Mrs. Croll, was wont to inform her bosom friends over sociable cups of tea: "The top floor is real gentry, though gives next to no trouble; and pays reglar as the clock, though as poor as poor, and sometimes doesn't see butcher-meat from one week's end to another. And," shaking her head mysteriously, "it's my impression 'as 'ow the poor dear young gentleman isn't long for this world, for he do cough most frightful and gets wasted-der-looking every day. And keeps scribbling away till all hours at them silly papers,

though not much he gets for 'em, I'll be bound. I just took a peep at some of them one day when he and the little 'un was out, and neither head nor tail of 'em could I make, though to be sure I'm no scholar, when all's said and done."

So far Mrs. Croll was certainly right; Dick and Robin *were* of a markedly different class from her other lodgers, and Dick *had* a troublesome cough, and *did* work very hard. But he got more for his "*scribblings*" than his landlady supposed, inasmuch as what he made by this work was all the brothers had to live upon. Sometimes it was little enough, though, and Dick's heart grew heavy, often, as he thought of the future, and of Robin.

As I have said, they had lived for two years in Lark Street. In their father's lifetime they had lived in a more refined, and consequently a more expensive district; but as Mr. Conyers—himself a struggling author—had many debts, and scanty means of paying them, the money which remained to his sons at his death was not considerable. They were motherless as well as fatherless, for Mrs. Conyers had died when Robin was born. Dick inherited his father's talent, and had no fear of failure in the profession he had chosen, though well aware that literary success is a work of time, a goal to which there is no royal road. A first-class education was the only legacy—and one not to be despised—left by Mr. Conyers to his eldest son, and Dick having a good memory, a keen imaginative faculty, and a fluent, forcible way of handling his subject, whatever it might be, bid fair to realize his hopes of success and to make no inconsiderable name in literature. But like most young authors, he had not a little difficulty in getting his articles accepted by the various magazines, and those editors who did graciously permit him to appear in their pages, did not overburden him with monetary remuneration.

Dick had never been a robust fellow, but this last winter had tried him sorely, and a cold he had caught one snowy day in early spring still clung about him persistently.

On a quiet May evening the brothers were sitting at the open window of the very limited apartment which served them as a sitting-room. It was a *very* small room, until compared with the box-like bedroom opening off it, which latter was lighted by a skylight in the roof, and which had the doubtful advantage of being stiflingly hot in summer and freezingly cold in winter. The window of the larger room overlooked the noisy street below, and Robin's chief amusement, when his brother was too busy to talk to him, was to sit at this window and watch the never-ending traffic, the occasional street fights, and the frequent feminine brawls which enlivened Lark Street. Right opposite there was a small fruit shop, kept by an old woman of vinegary aspect and keen, hawk-like eyes. Robin used to feel a curious awe of this old woman. She reminded him of a certain gruesome picture of a witch, which graced the pages of one of the few picture-books

he possessed. He always clutched Dick's hand firmly when they passed this shop; not that he was afraid, he would assure himself valiantly, but—perhaps she really *was* a witch! The window had other attractions, too, for in the very next window there hung a battered, dingy cage, which held—as an unlovely body sometimes holds a beautiful soul—a little bullfinch, which discoursed such sweet, heart-stirring music that Robin used to close his eyes and try to fancy himself in heaven. He felt sure the voices of the angels could not be sweeter. The bird knew Robin quite well, and when the boy leaned out of the window and chirped to it in his shrill little treble, it would hop to the side of the cage and chirp back to him in the most friendly manner possible. Lastly, on the window-sill Robin had a pot of musk, fragrant and healthy. Dick had bought it for him last summer, and the child tended it and watched it with loving, anxious care. He took it in every night, lest some gust of wind or some prowling cat should knock it over, and proudly called it his “flower-garden.”

To-night Dick's cough was very bad indeed, and stooping seemed to aggravate it; so he was, for a wonder, idle. Robin was leaning a little way out of the window; the bullfinch was singing a sleepy song before retiring for the night; a soft breeze blew the odour of the musk into the room and filled it with fragrance. It was Saturday night, and the street was already becoming aggressively lively and crowded. Two costermongers were engaged in a vituperative contest over their barrows; the “witch-woman” of the fruit shop, with shrill unwomanly invectives, was soundly cuffing a little ragged urchin who had, believing himself unseen, abstracted no less than three rosy-cheeked apples from the wicker basket at the shop door. Robin looked on with breathless interest until the culprit, having been thus summarily tried, condemned and punished, had run off howling round the corner. Then Robin drew himself in slowly.

“I say, Dick,” he said, in his clear fresh little voice, “I say, Dick, tell me about our grandfather. You said you would, you know, first time you weren't busy.” Dick laid down the book he was reading, and leaning his elbow on the window-sill, gazed out dreamily at the bit of blue sky visible over the tops of the opposite houses.

“Is he dead?” asked Robin soberly, as his brother did not answer.

“No, I don't think so,” answered the other. “He may be, though.”

“Then why doesn't he come to see us if he isn't dead?” pursued the child, resting his head on his hands.

“He and father quarrelled, I believe, when father married our mother,” replied Dick slowly. “He is a proud old man, and mother was poor. So he was angry, and they never spoke to each other again.”

"But lots of nice people are poor, aren't they?" asked Robin, looking mystified. "People wouldn't be if they could help it. We are poor."

"Exactly," answered his brother bitterly, speaking more to himself than to the child; "and that is why we must never presume to remind our grandfather that we exist."

"Would he come to see us if we were rich?" inquired Robin, gently blowing some specks of dust off the leaves of his beloved musk-plant.

"Oh, yes, I suppose he would," Dick replied, with a cynical look that set strangely on his young face. "That would be a different story. When you are rich and don't want any particular kindness shown you, every one *will* be kind to you. But when you are poor you may starve, little one, and they will never come near you or care whether you are dead or alive."

Robin meditated for a few minutes, then said:

"I say, grandfather must be a precious old sneak, mustn't he?"

Dick did not reply. It was very seldom that such bitter words fell from his lips, but to-day had been the anniversary of his father's death; and he remembered, with a fierce resentment, how earnestly the dying man in a few half-illegible pencilled words had begged old Mr. Conyers to come to him then, to bridge over the long silence and estrangement which had parted them. But his pleadings had been disregarded, and he had died without his father's forgiveness. Dick had felt bitterly towards his grandfather then; he felt more so now, but he rarely spoke of him. He had visions, this ambitious, haughty Dick, of becoming famous, world-renowned, and in his turn scorning the stern, hard old man who had embittered his adored father's last hours and had dared to speak of his sweet gentle mother as no fitting mate for a gentleman and a Conyers.

"Everybody isn't cruel to poor people, though," observed Robin, after a pause. "There's Mrs. Croll, now. See how kind she was to me when I had measles, and made gruel and poultices for you when the pain in your side was so bad. And only yesterday she gave me an apple."

"Quite right, Rob," returned Dick hastily. "I spoke unjustly. There is plenty of kindness in the world, I daresay. But one is apt to lose sight of it at times."

"And then, you know," gravely pursued Robin, feeling himself suddenly raised to the honourable position of counsellor, "grandfather may want to come all the time, and not know where we are."

Dick shook his head doubtfully, but the hard look had gone from his face, and his lips wore a tender smile as he met Robin's earnest grey eyes. At that moment Mrs. Croll came up with the tea. She, decent woman, took a pride in waiting as punctiliously on the "top-floor" as if they had been princes of the blood, for her

kind heart had warmed from the first to the lonely brothers, and she was a notable exception to the average London landlady, who is for the most part a mere sordid machine, to whom the men and women under her roof are not human beings, but merely lodgers.

May melted into June, and June in her turn gave place to July. The weather had been oppressively hot. Fresh air was at a premium in Lark Street. Dick's cough was more troublesome than ever, and he was often so languid and exhausted that he could not write anything for days. He had always hoped to feel stronger "when the warm weather came;" and now it had come and taken all his little remaining strength from him. He grew weaker every day, and at last, urged thereto by constant respectful advice from Mrs. Croll, went to see a doctor in the neighbourhood. The doctor told him plainly that he was in a very bad way, gave him a tonic, and recommended port wine, light nourishing food and change of air. He also added that too often most impossible of all prescriptions, "complete rest from all brain work, worry and anxiety." But he did not add, what he had seen at a glance, that Dick's remaining days on earth were but few, and that his left lung was almost entirely gone. Dick took the tonic, but, funds being low just then, left the other prescriptions for a future time. As for the last—well, the thought preyed upon his mind night and day, with a constant wearing anxiety, "If I am going to be seriously ill, if I am not going to get better, what will become of Robin?"

It was a clear, bright Sunday, the air was much cooler than it had been for days, and a fresh, healthy breeze was blowing. Until lately Dick had always made a point of attending, with Robin, each Sunday some place of public worship. Sometimes they went to one church, sometimes another, and as Dick's views as to sects and denominations were not narrow, Robin had heard many a good preacher, orthodox and otherwise. He understood what he heard, too, as well, or perhaps better, than most church-goers, thanks to Dick's gentle, patient explanations on the way home, or during their Sunday walks, or in the quiet Sunday evenings. Robin rarely went out alone. His brother had a horror of the child's associating with the coarse-tongued, lawless little ruffians of Lark Street, and Robin wanted no companion, if not Dick. They had not attended church for several Sundays, but to-day, as Dick felt rather better than usual, and as the day was so fine and not too warm, the brothers walked very slowly and, on Dick's part, very wearily, to a church about twenty minutes' walk from Lark Street. As the day advanced the air grew chillier, the sun disappeared, and the fresh breeze changed into a sharp, strong wind, which blew the little white clouds across the blue sky, and brought other and heavier clouds from the west that soon obscured the blue altogether. When the service was over and the congregation

streamed out of the well-filled church, a heavy rain was falling, a hopeless, determined rain, which held out no prospect of clearing off. It swept the pavements furiously, and as Dick and Robin had no umbrella they were speedily drenched. During the latter part of the way Dick took his brother in his arms and carried him, much against the little fellow's will, as far as their own door. But this exertion exhausted Dick so much that he coughed without stopping for almost half an hour after they got home.

"I say," said Robin, employing his usual formula as they sat in dry clothes after their simple dinner was over, "you haven't eaten hardly a scrap of dinner, Dick, and you're shivering most awfully. I shouldn't wonder if you've got more cold. Shall I set light to the fire? Perhaps you won't cough so much then."

Dick assented with a weary little gesture, and in a few minutes a cheery blaze lit up the walls of the dingy room, making a pleasing contrast to the soaking rain and grey sky outside. Dick lay down on the stiff little horsehair sofa, and Robin having covered him up with an overcoat and a rug, curled himself up on the hearth as close to his brother as possible. Dick was utterly worn out, and soon fell into an uneasy slumber, while Robin sat blinking at the fire as still as a mouse, until Mrs. Croll, in her Sunday cap and apron, pushed open the door with the tea-tray. Rob raised his little hand with a gesture as touching as it was old-fashioned for his years. But Dick opened his eyes and sat up.

"How are you feeling to-night, Mr. Conyers?" Mrs. Croll asked respectfully, as she placed the tray on the table. But a sudden fit of coughing seized Dick, and when it was over he was too much exhausted to speak for a minute or two.

"You're not much better, sir, I'm afraid," went on the landlady, looking down at him compassionately.

"Much as usual, thank you, Mrs. Croll," he said faintly, sinking back again on the hard, uncomfortable cushion. "I can't get rid of this cough, you see."

Mrs. Croll shook her head mournfully and went out, closing the door very softly behind her.

"Let me pour out the tea to-night, Dick?" asked Robin eagerly, "and I'll bring yours over to you."

"Mind you don't scald yourself, then," assented Dick, with the gentle smile he always had for Robin.

The child dragged a chair to the table, and kneeling upon it, he proceeded, with a grave and important face, to fill the two cups without spilling a drop. Then he drew another chair within reach of Dick's hand, and placed one cup and plate thereon, after having laboriously buttered two pieces of bread.

"I'm getting quite a man, Dick," he said seriously, as he climbed upon his chair again and attacked his own bread and butter.

"You are a good little fellow, anyway," responded Dick; "I don't know what I should do without you."

Rob's tiny heart swelled with pride at those words, but he went on munching his bread in silence. He was pondering in his childish mind the meaning of some chance words he had heard Mrs. Croll use the day before, as he came upstairs.

"And what the blessed child will do when his poor brother's taken, the Lord above only knows," had been the words he had overheard. And by some indefinable intuition he had known that they referred to Dick and himself. *Taken!* What did Mrs. Croll mean? The words sunk into his mind.

"What is it to be *taken*, Dick?" he asked suddenly, some hours afterwards, when the wild wet twilight had been shut out by the darkness and the fire glowed and flickered peacefully. Dick still reclined on the sofa, and Robin sat at the table beside the candle, with the "witch-book," as he always called it, open before him.

"To be taken?" repeated Dick absently. "I'm sure I don't know, little one. Why?"

Rob climbed down from his chair and took up his favourite position on the floor.

"Mrs. Croll said something yesterday about your being *taken*. At least I'm sure she was speaking of you. What did she mean?"

Dick's dark eyes grew darker, tenderer.

"Come here, little one," he said gently, holding out his hand as he spoke, "and I'll tell you what I think she meant."

Robin shuffled on his knees to his brother's side, and placed himself within his encircling arm.

"I have wanted to talk to you of this for some time, Rob," Dick went on in a very low voice. "But you are such a little chap yet, I hardly know how to begin so that you will understand."

"I'm seven years old," observed Rob, looking rather hurt; "at least, I shall be in a fortnight."

Dick was silent for a few minutes; then he said, and his voice shook a little:

"Robin, old fellow—I think Mrs. Croll meant—that I am going to leave you."

"To leave me, Dick?" repeated the child, looking up at him with startled, uncomprehending eyes.

"Yes. You know, Rob, I have been getting worse for a long time, and I saw the doctor again yesterday. He says that—I shall never be any better—that very soon—" He stopped, and then went on in a sharp anguished voice that was almost a cry, "Oh, my little brother, how can I tell you! How can I leave you all alone!"

For a moment Robin was speechless; then, his eyes dark with terror, he burst out:

"Dick! Dick! You don't mean—oh *say* you don't mean that you are going away like father did—that you are going to *die*! Ah, Dick, *don't* say it!"

"My dear little Robin, that is what I do mean," said Dick in unsteady tones, holding the child close to his breast, and caressing the fair, thick hair.

"Oh, Dick, don't! don't! I can't stay here without you," cried Robin in a passion of agonized tears. "I don't want to go on living if you are going to die. Ask God to let me die too."

"Hush, hush," whispered Dick agitatedly. "Be brave, Rob, and listen to me. It is not time for you to die yet. I want you to grow up into a good, true man, and——"

"I can't be good if you are not here," wailed the poor little fellow, with heavy bursting sobs that went to Dick's heart. "There will be nobody to care."

"Yes, my Robin, there will be God to care," said Dick in a low voice.

"But I want *you*!" sobbed the child. "I can't see God. I want you. Oh, Dick, nobody can be like you!" And in a passion of sobs and tears, he broke from his brother's loving hold, and, rushing into the darkest corner of the room, he flung himself on the ground and cried as though his heart would break.

"Robin, come here, old fellow, come here to me," said Dick in a tender, troubled voice. But the child took no notice, and after speaking to him once or twice, his brother judged it better to let him have his cry out, and waited until the passionate sobs grew fainter and gradually ceased altogether. Then Dick rose, and stooping over him, took the little hot hands from the tear-stained face. As he did so, a half-sad smile curved his lips, for he saw that Robin had cried himself to sleep.

In an old-fashioned, ramblingly-built house in one of the northern counties, a stately old man—stately still, though his years approached ninety—sat in his gloomy library in the eerie summer twilight. His haughty face, which would have been handsome but for the hard, cold eyes, wore a look of mingled grief, chagrin, and disappointment. For his grandson, his only acknowledged grandson, was dead—swept off the deck of his yacht in a storm—and the old man knew that the splendid estate of Corinmains would go, in spite of him, to the son of his own scapegrace youngest son, clever, devil-may-care Teddy Conyers and his low-born wife. It was a bitter thought. He sat silent there for a long time, while the room grew darker, and the wind moaned through the pines in the avenue outside. But as he mused his face grew softer, his eyes almost wistful. Over the mantelpiece hung the portrait of a youth, apparently about one-and-twenty. A face line for line like the face of young Dick Conyers—line for

line except the mouth, which was weak and undecided, though sweet as a woman's.

The old man rose, and gazed long and earnestly at the proud, daring, intellectual face. And as he gazed, his heart, which had been frozen for twenty-three years, thawed, and became a human heart again.

"Ay, ay, poor Ted," he reflected, and his stern lips trembled. "Poor Ted! Perhaps, 'after all, I was wrong; I might as well have forgiven him. Where is the boy, I wonder, or were there two? Dick, the eldest was called, I fancy. *He* can't have made any low marriage yet, he's too young. Pshaw!" He frowned, rang for the lamp, and settled himself before the fire, for it was a chilly night, with a magazine, of which he cut the leaves slowly and deliberately. He skimmed over the contents, and soon became absorbed in an exceedingly clever article on one of the leading topics of the day, an article which he had seen favourably noticed in several leading literary papers, which all spoke highly of the promise of the writer. As he turned to the last page the old man started violently, and glanced involuntarily at the portrait over the mantelpiece. For the writer's signature was the same as his own—Richard Conyers. He rose and walked agitatedly up and down the room.

"It must be Ted's boy," he muttered. "Poor Ted! Poor Ted! And so the lad has inherited his father's talent. Thank God he has not taken after his vapid, low-born mother. He will make a name in the world. He will be famous. He will be worthy to inherit the old place, and, by Heaven, this shall be his home henceforward. I'll go to town in the morning and get his address from his publishers. I'm sure there was another one—a baby. I'll bring them both. They'll be glad enough! Egad! he must be a clever young fellow!" Trembling with excitement, he sat down and read the article over again, carefully and critically. Then he rang, and desired that the housekeeper, Mrs. Briggs, should be sent to him at once.

"Mrs. Briggs," he said, as she entered, and his voice shook in spite of his efforts to maintain his usual calm and dignified manner, "I wish rooms to be prepared for my two grandsons, whom I expect will be here to-morrow. My eldest grandson, Mr. Richard Conyers, is a literary man," he continued pompously, "so have the corner room, overlooking the park, arranged as a study, and have everything ready by six o'clock to-morrow evening."

The old housekeeper looked pleased, though tearful, for she knew it was "Master Ted's boys" who were coming to the home from which their father had been an exile and an alien, and to which they themselves were as yet strangers.

After the night when Robin had cried himself to sleep in his passionate grief, he followed his brother about like a persistent

little shadow ; though, indeed, Dick rarely left the sofa now. If he slept during the day, Robin sat patiently at his side until he awoke. And at other times the little fellow sat watching him with a wistful, heart-broken look in his childish eyes that pierced his brother's very soul. Dick was very weak now. Every day his cough seemed to rack and tear him more cruelly. Every day found him more worn and exhausted. He had given up writing altogether of late, and had barely strength to look over and correct his last proofs. His last, indeed ! he thought, sadly. When he had given them to Robin to post, he fell back, almost fainting, the slightest exertion tried him so terribly now.

"Robin," he said one night, when they had remained silent for a long time in the gathering summer twilight, "Robin, come here, little one ; I want to talk to you." Robin came to his side silently. Dick was lying on the couch, for he could no longer sit up for any length of time. "I have written to grandfather," he went on, after a minute or two, "and asked him to take care of you when—when I can take care of you no longer. I think he will not refuse."

Robin had crept closer to him, for Dick's voice was very faint and low. The child's breast heaved, his eyes filled with tears ; but he pressed his little lips firmly together, and clasped his hands tightly behind him, that he might not cry.

"I daresay I have given you a wrong impression of him," continued Dick in troubled tones. "I'm afraid I have ; he may be very different now, and I know you will try to please him, Rob. Won't you, old fellow ?"

"Yes," answered the child, with trembling lips.

"And, Rob, remember," and Dick's weak voice grew almost stern, "never tell a lie, never break a promise, and," earnestly, "do nothing that you would be ashamed of your old Dick knowing, if he were with you. Promise me this, dear little one."

"Yes, dear Dick, I promise," faltered the little fellow. Then piteously, "Oh, Dick, I *must* cry, I can't help it," and throwing himself upon his brother's breast he sobbed passionately and hysterically. Dick spoke to him soothingly and tenderly, and Rob soon controlled himself with wonderful self-command for so young a child.

"Dick," he said, after a pause, "I ask God every night in my prayers to let me die when you do. Do you think He will ?"

Dick did not answer, he could not ; but he drew Robin closer to him and held him very tightly. Robin could not see his face, but he had an awed feeling that Dick was crying.

There was a long silence after that, and then, quite suddenly, Dick was seized with a terrible fit of coughing, a fit so violent and lasting so long, that Robin ran in dismay for Mrs. Croll,

who hurried upstairs with her cap all awry, but her kind face full of sympathy and concern.

Dick was lying back, white and exhausted, with closed eyes and quick-drawn breath. The paroxysm had ceased, but the handkerchief he held was stained a deep ominous crimson.

Rob uttered a low cry.

"Oh, dear heart!" exclaimed Mrs. Croll hastily. "Run round, Master Robin, dear, for the doctor, and tell him to be quick."

Robin fled like the wind, and returned in an incredibly short space of time.

"The doctor is out," he panted, "but they will send him whenever he comes in."

Dick smiled faintly, and pressed his brother's hand.

"Don't let me keep you, Mrs. Croll," he said, in a weak whisper. "Robin will do all I want; I am all right now."

Mrs. Croll went away—rubbing her eyes with her rough apron as she went—and left her kitchen half cleaned to watch at the door for the doctor.

"Dick," said Robin, with quivering lips and wet eyes, "you are not—going away—*now*? You look so white. Say you are not!"

"No, no," whispered Dick, with his old tender smile. "Don't look so terrified, my wee fellow. Put your head down here, I can't talk—much."

"Coughing so long has tired you," said Robin, putting his arm under Dick's head in his grave, quaint way; "perhaps you will fall asleep now."

"Perhaps," Dick answered. "I am very tired; kiss me, old fellow."

Robin laid his lips softly on his brother's forehead, and then stood stroking his hair, as he remembered Dick used to do when he (Robin) was ill long ago.

The room gradually became quite dark. Dick seemed to sleep; his head lay heavily on the slender little arm that supported it.

As a neighbouring clock struck ten, Mrs. Croll came up again, this time with the doctor.

"Hush! Dick is asleep!" whispered Robin, as the doctor held the candle over the white still face.

Yes, Dick was asleep. But it was the sleep from which there is no awaking.

Robin's wild grief when he realized that his brother had gone from him, was piteous to see and hear. Mrs. Croll took him downstairs on that first terrible night, but with the earliest streak of dawn he crept up to Dick again, to the room which seemed already so strangely hushed and silent, and sat holding

the chill hand in his, and kissing passionately the quiet, worn face which would soften and smile for him no more.

They had laid Dick on his bed in the little inner room; the windows of both rooms were open; the bullfinch was singing gaily. Robin thought its song seemed heartless and cruel. He laid his head down on the pillow beside Dick, and sobbed silently.

Mrs. Croll coming up at her own breakfast-time, found him there. "Do come downstairs, Master Robin," the good creature entreated tearfully, "and have some tea and toast with me. You can do your poor brother no good now. He is better off, and doesn't need you, my lamb. Come away."

But the child only shook his head, and looked wistfully at the white, almost stern, face on the pillow. He did not understand it, poor little soul. He felt half afraid of this strange, cruel Dick, who would not speak to him, who lay so still and cold, not heeding the kisses and the tears of the little brother he had loved so fondly.

"I never said good-bye to him," he said, looking up into Mrs. Croll's face with miserable, anguished eyes. "Never promised him again that I would be good, and do all that he said." The little faithful, desolate heart overflowed, and he cried as he had never cried before. Mrs. Croll went away. She was crying, too.

After a long time Robin rose, and walked to the open window of the front room. Down in the witch-woman's shop he saw lovely bunches of flowers. They were not in their first freshness, but they looked lovely to Rob. He remembered seeing a funeral the very last time he and Dick were out together, and the coffin was covered with flowers. They would put his darling brother in a coffin, too, he thought with a shudder. He looked down again at the flowers. He felt sure the witch-woman would give him some if he told her Dick was dead. He did not feel afraid of her now. He slipped downstairs very quietly, for he dreaded lest Mrs. Croll should see him and take him into her kitchen. Tea or toast would choke him, he thought wretchedly. When he got out into the air he staggered a little, for he was sick and giddy with crying, and he had eaten nothing all day. The tears dimmed his eyes so that he could hardly see as he ran across the street. Ere he reached the other side a heavy dray came thundering past, and Robin, startled and confused, stumbled and fell under the horses' feet. There was a sharp, shrill cry, a hoarse shout; then the sound of many voices, the hurrying of many feet. Robin lay motionless on the hard stones, nor did he stir when they lifted him. A tall young man pushed his way through the crowd which had rapidly collected. It was the doctor who had come the night before to see Dick. He carried the child into the nearest doorway—which chanced to be the witch-woman's shop—felt his heart and his little thin wrist, then shook his head, for

both heart and pulse were still. The cruel wheels had passed over the slender little neck, and Robin was dead.

Towards the evening of the same day a hansom stopped at Mrs. Croll's door, and a white-haired, haughty-looking old gentleman alighted slowly and painfully.

"Pooh! This can't be the place," he muttered, leaning on his gold-headed stick to look up at the windows. "The boy can't live *here*—it's impossible."

Mrs. Croll opened the door in answer to his imperative knock.

"You are—a friend of Mr. Conyers, sir?" she asked in subdued tones. For indeed there was a startling likeness between this face and a young dead face upstairs.

"Yes. Can I see him?" said the stranger, in tones that shook in spite of himself.

And Mrs. Croll, supposing from his evident agitation that he knew of the sad events of the last two days, led the way in respectful silence to the third floor. The visitor entered the outer room slowly, and Mrs. Croll went away quietly, closing the door behind her. It was very still in the room. The window stood open, and the wind ruffled the scented leaves of the musk-plant on the sill. The bullfinch was silent in its cage.

The old man walked to the door of the inner room and went in. Then he stood still, and a terrible change passed over his face, for he saw that he was too late. Another guest—a guest who takes no denial—had been there before him; and Corinmains would pass to strangers.

OUR NEWEST LOVE-POET.

POETRY, the golden harp of life, to whose strong or soft music the sweetest and noblest thoughts have been sung, is at a very low ebb in the present day. That which is in very truth the greatest of all the arts is now, or seems to be, the one most held in slight and contumely. Painters have many opportunities of exhibiting and possibly selling their works, good composers and musicians are more or less in demand, prose writers of all classes can by dint of plod and perseverance manage to squeeze into the ranks of literature either by the door of journalism or persistent novel-manufacture, but poets, new ones at any rate, have scarce a chance to be heard. Tennyson, with his glorious past enveloping him as it were in an emperor's robe of state, stands supreme in the foreground—a stately figure worthy of our love and reverence,—the type of the true bard who has never deserted his calling, and who now, with the shadow of Azrael's wings darkening above him, still lifts his inspired voice undismayed. What though the voice be grown feebler and some of the once ringing tones jarred in the sounding? It is the same voice that chanted the haunting music of the "Lotos Eaters," and the majesty of the "Morte D'Arthur," and we should indeed be more callous than we are, did we refuse to honour the kingly old minstrel who, in spite of the morbid and baneful influences surrounding much of the literature of the present day, has kept the white garments of his pure Muse unsullied. Behind him—a very long way behind him—stands the apostle of red republicanism, atheism and licentiousness, Algernon Charles Swinburne, a man endowed by nature with the most brilliant gifts of intellect, and filled to the lips with music of most subtle and penetrating sweetness, and who, notwithstanding these advantages, resembles nothing so much as the Sultan in fairy-lore whose jewelled crown was endowed with a voice which served to reprove or advise him. Tired at last of the sincere and unflattering remarks of his magical mentor, and yielding to a fit of petulant anger, one day the Sultan snatched the speaking diadem from his brow and throwing it in the dust trampled upon it. As he did so the dying voice within it wailed, "Even so, O Ruler, shalt thou perish, and thy glory be remembered no more." Swinburne, crowned in his youth with the choicest jewels in the treasury of song, has chosen to ignore the lofty and delicate

meaning of poesy in its highest form ; with rough and lascivious touch he has dragged it to the basest level of materialism—in brief, he has thrown his diadem in the dust, and the perishing voice within it prophesies his unwritten doom, which shall not by us be yet anticipated. Behind Swinburne again—let not the elect be scandalized!—behind Swinburne, because so much inferior to Swinburne in power and passion (power and passion being two of the leading requisites in poetry), stands the venerable Robert Browning, the propounder of dark sayings, the producer of rugged verse—verse resembling blocks of quartz from an unsuccessful mine, in which may occasionally be found the suggestion of a vein of gold—a man who had the inimitable good fortune to be wedded to a veritable child of the Muses, Elizabeth Barrett, on whose eloquently silent grave he has built up his own phantom reputation. What can be said of this weaver of spider's webs, in which now and then a bewildered fly of meaning is strangely entangled, and notwithstanding entanglement seems ever striving to escape ; the “poet”—Heaven save the mark!—who permits a “Society” to exist for the ostensible purpose of “explaining” his works, but which to the practical-minded among us seems more like a case of blatant advertisement, to which no living author, were he great as Shakespeare, should condescend without indignant public protest ! Far greater than his works would Browning be if he were openly and energetically to crush this “Society,” presided over by persons of vastly inferior intelligence to himself—almost would he seem great in very truth were he to act for once as if he thought little of himself and much of other men. But alas ! there is no sign of such worthy self-renunciation on his part, and the “Society” bearing his name proudly announces of itself that never was it so prosperous as at the present moment, its prosperity having led it to establish an “agent” in New York, as if Browning's works were a sort of quack medicine, to be obtained only at the advertised depôts ! Surely this is a somewhat vulgar and undignified method of spreading a literary reputation, and quite unworthy of Browning's tacit sanction. Yet we should not be surprised at anything from an author who poses as a philosopher, yet cannot explain his philosophy ; a poet who strikes harsh discord instead of sweet harmony ; a professing teacher of mankind who cannot make his lessons clear, and who in his recent book, “Parleyings,” is insufferably, drearily, hopelessly *dull*.

These three, Tennyson, Swinburne and Browning, occupy the largest frontage in our modern field of song, and we have learned to listen to them with a certain amount of admiration and tolerance. The grand rush of the waves that surge through our literature from the ocean of thought we call Shakespeare,—the liquid fire that melts down the mountain of Shelley's genius,—the passionate, strong, tender singing, like notes of nightingales heard

by moonlight, that ripple to us from the wild sad voices of Byron and Keats,—these were gifts of the gods, and it is doubtful whether the world will ever hear such word-music again, for even Tennyson at his best has never written anything equal to Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn," or the fragment of "Hyperion." Of the smaller singers such as Edwin Arnold, Matthew Arnold, the two Morrises, Alfred Austin, Edmund Gosse, Thomas Woolner, Austin Dobson, Ashby Sterry and the crowd of infinitely little poetlings who, like itinerant Italians, wander on the edges of the Art, and twirl their hurdy-gurdies or blow their feeble imitative pipes to amuse the passers-by for a few moments, we say nothing here; in all ages this passing tribe of minstrels has always existed to please the lower grades of thought, just as the organ-grinders amuse servants and footmen. One can scarce forbear a smile at the self-assertion of Lewis Morris for instance, who calls Tennyson his "master," a clever way of slipping out of the accusations which weigh upon him regarding his thefts (involuntary of course) from the treasure-house of the author of the "Idylls of the King." Mr. Morris makes no apology to the dead Dante for translating whole passages in his "Epic of Hades" from parts of the "Inferno;" he thinks, and thinks rightly too, that few English people read Italian. In a similar way Edwin Arnold is perfectly correct in his calculation that London society taken *en masse* is not intimately acquainted with the two great Hindu epics, the "Ramayāna" and the "Mahabhārata," in the original tongue, nor with the works of the great mystic Sūfi poet Dschelaleddin Rumi, and therefore is not likely to draw unpleasant parallels between certain passages therein and "The Light of Asia." However, there are a few scholars left among us, and though few they are apt. Sham jewels do not deceive them, and they will never accept aluminium for real gold. Therefore in these days of Brummagem literature and parrot-jargon of silly meaningless verse published by countless rhymesters both male and female, who obstruct the road of the real artist and who bring the very name of poetry into disrepute, it is with a certain relief and gladness that we hail the advent of a new poet, a modern troubadour, who has but recently made his name known among us, and who, if one may judge by the dedication of his last book to Robert Browning, seems possessed by a spirit of singular diffidence and modesty. More of this dedication anon; at present we must keep to the subject matter in hand, which is to inquire into the merits of an entirely new writer, who, thanks to the far-seeing energy and activity of a particularly go-ahead publisher (Walter Scott, Paternoster Row), has been snatched up and placed, while living, in the classic series known as the "Canterbury Poets," where he holds his own with Keats and Coleridge, and is as eagerly prized as any one of the great dead whose works are household words. Messrs. Field and Tuer, of Leadenhall Street, were, we believe,

the first publishers of what *Truth* designated "the daintiest little book in the world," a small volume bound in white vellum and tied with golden ribbon, entitled "Love Letters by a Violinist." The work was anonymous and the wildest guesses were formed as to its author. Society papers made random hits concerning his name and position; and, needless to say, were all wrong in their surmises. One of the most absurd among the reports circulated was that the Duke of Edinburgh was the "Violinist" in question, and this gained such ground that his Royal Highness was very nearly convicted of being a genius.

The "Independent" of New York was the first to clear up the mystery, and this journal declared the author to be Eric Mackay, an Englishman, and one of its own contributors. On the "Love-Letters" appearing among the Canterbury Classics, the correctness of this announcement was made manifest, as the title of the volume now stands, "Love-Letters of a Violinist," by Eric Mackay, instead of as formerly, "Love-Letters by a Violinist." With marked persistency the leading literary journals entirely passed over the new author, who thus quietly took his place among the gods of literature.

The "Athenæum" in particular, which usually makes a point of reviewing all the Canterbury volumes, deliberately omitted to notice this one. By the London press at large the book was slighted, and there can be no doubt whatever that the slight was intentional. Yet the "Love-Letters" sold, and is still selling by thousands, and its enormous circulation may well cause envy to many other writers of verse, who, though carefully praised by the press, fail to dispose of their productions. Eric Mackay has taken his position in English literature, unquestioned and uncriticized, and henceforth neither praise nor blame can affect the hold he has on that portion of the public which reads and appreciates good poetry.

And now let us see what gifts he possesses, what sympathetic attributes, what knowledge of the human heart, that he should deserve this sudden and almost phenomenal success in a branch of art wherein so many fail and miserably perish. In the first place then, he is a love-poet; all his songs are attuned to the one eloquent, resounding string. Now Love is a deeply comprehensive term. It can be varied to suit different opinions; as for instance, with Tennyson it is a beautiful, soft, almost devout delight; with Swinburne it is reckless licentiousness; with Browning it is a passing emotional accident of human life; with Eric Mackay it is life itself, and not only life in this world, but life in the world to come. He views it from its highest standpoint, as the noblest sentiment of the heart and soul; the essence of a god within each one of us. Being, therefore, so lofty a passion, it follows that the loftiest mode of expression should be used to define it, and here in truth we have the real intention and

use of poetry. To delineate in choicest words the choicest feelings; to gather up as it were into a sonnet, verse or even a couplet, the thousand and one delicate threads of most delicate thought, and fasten them together with an immortal jewel of complete utterance, this is the most perfect kind of poetry, such as Shakespeare, Byron, Keats and Shelley gave us in abundance, and which also we have specimens of in the works of two unglorified poets, Alexander Smith and one Thomas Wade, whose sonnet entitled "The Bride" is one of the most exquisite things in all literature. In Eric Mackay, whom because he is living we are naturally reluctant to praise, there is an undoubted wealth of music and expression that reminds us of poesy's palmiest days. Involuntarily we think of Petrarch, who spent all his best hours in polishing and perfecting the deliciously-rhymed praise of his "Laura,"—and on studying the "Love-Letters" with a critical eye, we must confess that nothing more perfectly attuned and delicately pleasing to the ear has ever been written in the English language, a language which is somewhat unaccommodating in its rhymes, and yet, in these particular poems, has been artistically manipulated and made to flow on with the ease and grace of the choicest Italian. There is no hitch or stop on the way, nothing rough or jarring.

Take the following verses for instance :

"And what a scene, O God! and what repose
And what sad splendour in the burning west :
A languid sun low-dropping to his rest,
And incense rising, as of old it rose
To do him honour at the daylight's close,—
The birds entranced, and all the winds repressed.

"I followed thee. I came to where a shrine
Stood 'mid the trees, and where an oaken gate
Swung in the air, so turbulent of late.
I touched thy hand; it quivered into mine,
And then I looked into thy face benign
And saw the smile for which the angels wait.

"And lo! the moon had sailed into the main
Of that blue sky, as if therein did poise
A silver boat; and then a tuneful noise
Broke from the cope where late a breeze was slain,—
And nightingales in ecstasy of pain
Did break their hearts with singing the old joys."

This is a picture, or rather a series of pictures, drawn in softly harmonious colours, and if space permitted we could select more than fifty such out of the "Love-Letters" alone. But the volume is now so familiar to many that it is perhaps superfluous to make quotations from it; in fact, as it has been permitted to take an unquestioned place among the English classics, the very critics having, as it were, silently stood aside to allow it to pass into the front rank of literature, it is almost too late in the day to begin

to dissect its workmanship or discuss its merits. Moreover, there is no doubt whatever that it deserves its position, and that the delightful ease of language, richness of fancy, and original turn of thought contained in these twelve rhymed epistles of a lover to his lady, prove the author to be no mere ordinary versifier, but a veritable poet, not only of high accomplishment, but still higher promise. What an entrancing picture of a love-dream lasting beyond this life is found in the following stanzas :

" A world with thee, a home in some remote
And unknown region which no sage's ken
Has compassed yet ; of which no human pen
Has traced the limits ; where no terrors float
In wind or wave, and where the soul may note
A thousand raptures unreveal'd to men.

" To be transported in a magic car
On some transcendent night in early June
Beyond the horn'd projections of the moon ;
To have our being in a bridal star
In lands of light where only angels are,
Athwart the spaces where the comets swoon.

* * * *

" This were a life to live,—a life indeed
A thing to die for ; if in truth we die
When we but put our mortal vestments by.
This were a climax for a lover's need
Sweeter than songs, and holier than the creed
Of half the zealots who have sought the sky ! "

Here we have the dulcet whisperings of a Keats, combined with a certain seductive, dreamy ardour which is our new poet's particular charm and which characterizes everything he has written. From all the chords of Love's passion and ecstasy he draws new and voluptuous meanings. In happy transport he exclaims :

" O Love ! O Love ! O Gateway of Delight,
Thou porch of peace, thou pageant of the prime
Of all God's creatures ! I am here to climb
Thine upward steps, and daily and by night
To gaze beyond them, and to search aright
The far-off splendour of thy track sublime !

* * * *

" Love ! Happy Love ! Behold me where I stand
This side thy portal, with my straining eyes
Turn'd to the Future. Cloudless are the skies
And, far adown the road which thou hast spann'd
I see the groves of that elected land
Which is the place I call my Paradise."

In "Letter X.," entitled "A Retrospect," the astonishing profuseness and beauty of simile is well worth noting. The poet is describing a nook on the sea-shore, sacred to the meetings of himself and his ladye-love.

" I walk again beside the roaring sea
And once again I hearken to the speech
Of waves exulting on the mad, lene beach.

A sound of awful joy it seems to me,
A shuddering sound of God's eternity,
Telling of things beyond the sage's reach.

" I walk alone. I see the bounding waves
Curl'd into foam. I watch them as they leap
Like wild sea-horses loosened from the deep,
And well I know that they have seen the graves
Of shipwrecked sailors ; for disaster paves
The fearful fields where reapers cannot reap.

* * * *

" There is a glamour all about the bay
As if the nymphs of Greece had tarried here ;
The sands are golden, and the rocks appear
Crested with silver ; and the breezes play
Snatches of song they hummed when far away,
And then are hush'd as if from sudden fear.

" They think of thee. They hunt ; they meditate ;
They will not quit the shore till they have seen
The very spot where thou didst stand serene
In all thy beauty ; and of me they prate,
Knowing I love thee. And like one elate
The grand old sea remembers what hath been.

" How many hours—how many days we met
Here on the beach, in that delirious time
When all the waves appeared to break in rhyme.
Life was a joy, and love was like a debt,
Paid and repaid in kisses ! "

We would specially call the attention of our readers to the perfect swing of the musical rhythm in these stanzas. They read as harmoniously as Petrarch's lines :

" Benedetto sia 'l giorno e 'l meso e l' anno,
E la stagione e 'l tempo e l' ora e 'l punto,
E 'l bel paese e 'l loco ov' io fui giunto
Da due begli occhi che legato m' hanno
E benedetto il primo dolce affanno
Ch' i 'ebbi ad esser con Amor congiunto. . . ."

And it is very rarely indeed that English verse can be chimed into such melody as Italian—Italian being so much softer in the utterance and infinitely richer in rhyme. The more we read and critically dissect the "Love-Letters of a Violinist" and other poems by the same author, the more remarkable a thing it is, in the chronicles of our modern literature, that this new poet—a man undoubtedly destined to take a peculiarly prominent place among the most distinguished writers of his time—should have escaped the criticism of the press. Either the self-constituted judges of poetry must be very blind or very envious. Envy being a passion unknown to critics, we must attribute their lamentable lack of observation to mere density. For no matter how long they hold their peace, the reading public has a will of its own and chooses its own favourites, and the indisputable fact that Eric Mackay's poems promise to sell as largely as the time-honoured

works of Keats, Byron, and Shelley, is a decisive and rather remarkable testimony to the worth of our new author's genius. Genius he has most unquestionably—its flame burns through his verse and lights it up at every point. Such lines as these :

"The hills exulted at the Morning's birth,
And clouds assembled, quick, as heralds run
Before a king to say the fight is won.
The rich warm daylight fell upon the earth,
Like wine outpoured in madness or in mirth,
To celebrate the rising of the sun !"

could not emanate from the brain of a mere trifler with poesy ; nor such an exquisite expression as the last line of the following quotation :

"I heard afar the watch-dog's sullen bark,
And near at hand the tunings of a lark,
Safe in its nest, but *weighted with an ode.*"

And again :

"I will unpack my mind of all its fears ;
I will advance to *where the matin fires.*
Absorb the hills."

Or this :

"It were a joy to fall
Dead at thy feet, as at a trumpet's call,
For I should then be peerless among men !"

Many of the minor poems included in the same volume with the "Love-Letters" are very beautiful,—such as "Anteros," which is rich with the flavour of subtle Greek fancy,—the regretfully tender "Mirage," "The Statue," the "Waking of the Lark," the fine stanzas to "Pablo de Sarasate," and the quaintly sweet "Daisies out at Sea," from which we quote the following :

"O gems of earth ! O trinkets of the Spring !
The sun, your gentle king
Who counts your leaves and marshals ye apace
In many a sacred place.
The godlike summer sun will miss ye all,
For he has fostered all things great and small,
Yea, all good things that live on earth's revolving ball.

"But when, on deck, he sees with eye serene
The kirtles tender green,
And fair fresh faces of his hardy flowers,
How will he throb for hours !
And wish the lark, the Laureate of the Light,
Were near at hand to see so fair a sight,
And chant the joys thereof in words we cannot write !"

A few of the sonnets at the end of the book bear the marks of haste, and therefore are somewhat laboured. Our poet, like all of his high craft, is not always in the humour to sing sweetly, and

therefore we find fault with him for condescending to such trifles as "My Amazon," "Sachal," and the somewhat obscurely-worded "Ode to Englishmen." There are unsatisfactory lines, too, in "Mary Arden," though the general conception of the poem is good. "Pro Patria," an address to Swinburne, is decidedly powerful, and "Beethoven at the Piano," which, we understand, is to be included in Clifford Harrison's *répertoire* for next season, is full of colour and feeling. The sonnet entitled "Ecstasy" is a perfect gem :

"I cannot sing to thee as I would sing
If I were quickened like the holy lark
With fire from Heaven and sunlight on his wing,
Who wakes the world with witcheries of the dark
Renewed in rapture in the reddening air.
A thing of splendour do I deem him then,
A feathered frenzy with an angel's throat,
A something sweet that somewhere seems to float
'Twixt earth and sky to be a sign to men.
He fills me with such wonder and despair!
I long to kiss thy locks so golden bright,
As he doth kiss the tresses of the Sun.
Oh! bid me sing to thee, my chosen one,
And do thou teach me, Love, to sing aright!"

No more exquisite example of musical alliteration can well be found than these two lines :

"Who wakes the world with witcheries of the dark,
Renewed in rapture in the reddening air!"

and the description of the singing skylark :

"A feathered frenzy with an angel's throat,"

is absolutely new, and can hardly be matched in the most inspired lines of Shelley.

It is after all by the gift of *complete utterance* that poets should be judged. Can they say something that has never been said so well before, and that never will be said so well again? This is the supreme test, by which most versifiers shrink and shrivel into nought. And this is why we are disposed to give Eric Mackay a laurel wreath of merit, because he has undoubtedly said new things in a way of his own, and there is no touch of the commonplace or the imitative in his smoothly-flowing stanzas. Other poets have written about kisses, for instance; yet in the "Love-Letters" this magic current coin of lovers is treated to an entirely original and quaint conceit :

"And round my lips in joy and yet in fear
There seem'd to dart the stings of kisses warm;
*These were my honey bees and soon would swarm
To choose their Queen!*"

This is a delicate little fancy, and infinitely preferable to the savage "biting" of lips that Swinburne is so fond of. Innumer-

able are the songs and odes that have been written about the moon; in fact, as the vulgar rhyme goes:

"Poets have so bedaubed the silver moon,
They've made her as dull as a leaden spoon!"

Dreamy speculations have been hazarded by poets in all ages as to the "wistful pallor" and "languid brow" of the gentle queen of night. Sir Philip Sidney thinks she must suffer from rejected passion.

"Surely, if long-with-love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case!"

he exclaims. In Alexander Smith's "Life Drama" we find the lines:

"Sorrowful moon! seeming so drown'd in woe,
A queen whom some grand battle-day has left
Unkingdom'd and a widow!"

And yet, though we should have hardly thought it possible, Eric Mackay has a new idea to offer as to the reason of Cynthia's legendary griefs, and asks her:

"Dost thou weep to know that Jupiter
Has many moons—his daughters and his sons—
And Earth, thy mother, only one in thee?"

We find in the "Love-Letters and other Poems" countless airy and elf-like suggestions such as these—suggestions like the fluttering of the butterflies' wings over half-opened roses. And though love is the chief *motif* of all, it is a beautiful, hesitating, diffident love, as shadowed forth in the lines:

"I dare to look thy way and bow my head
To thy sweet name, as sunflower to the sun;
Though, peradventure, not so wisely fed
With garden fancies——"

And of low, materialistic passion, such as many of our modern writers are only too fond of dealing with, there is no trace whatever throughout the book.

Let us now turn to our author's latest production, "Gladys the Singer," published by Messrs. Reeves and Turner. It is of an entirely different type to the "Love-Letters," and in some passages shows increased power and greater expansiveness of thought. It is a condensed novel in verse, and is the old, ever piteous story of a woman's love, betrayal and despair. Gladys was once a "*prima donna assoluta*."

"One of those elect
And fond, fair women whom the world has deck'd
But will not honor."

Led away by love for one unworthy of her trust, she is deceived and broken-hearted, and the sequel to the sad story is so plaintively pathetic and touching that it seems like injustice to quote a part when the whole is so beautiful. As in the "Love-

Letters," we find "Gladys" brimful of enchanting similes. Note the following selections:

"I have yearn'd for thee
As earth for summer—as the lonely sea
For midnight stars!"

* * * *
"An April daisy turn'd into a screen
For elfin lovers."

* * * *
"I love thee as a kneeling nun
Loves in the circuit of her little cell
The pictur'd face of Christ, who conquer'd hell."
* * * *

Full of power and infinite passion is the bitter reproach of the wronged "Gladys" to her faithless lover:

"O thou dried soul whom long I deem'd a man,
Monarch of men, and mine for all the span
Of all our lives in this world and the next;
O thou weak boaster of a brainless text,
Fitter to fill a trench than be the curse
Of one more summer, or to move me worse
Than now thou mov'st me! Nay! I hate thee not;
Who hates the worm? Who hates the canker-blot
On some poor tree? I see thee as thou art;
I sound thy depths. I read thee to the heart.
I find thee shallow as a clamorous rill
That wends its way, uncall'd for, down a hill!"

And again, half frenzied with love and despair, she cries:

"All evil thee beset,
Thou blight of morning! All remorse and shame
Possess thy soul and sap the ancient fame
Of thy great house! I was too frail a thing,
Too quickly won—too impotent to sting—
A fair-haired frailty with attractive eyes."

And here we may remark that it is possible very goody-goody people will not like "Gladys the Singer." There is no doubt whatever that she is a "fair-haired frailty," and as such, the goody-goody folks will, of course, have no sympathy with her. But she is a true woman, with all a woman's inconsistencies and glorious code of self-sacrifice—one of the numerous victims who, immolated on the altar of love, will die smiling and kissing the hand of the executioner. Her wrath against her lover is of brief duration; her passionate outburst of scorn and hatred is soon ended. With his departure, her humour changes:

"Come back!' she call'd, as open wide she flung
The lattice window, where the roses hung
In crumpled wreaths. 'Come back, and learn from me
What no man knows,—what haply unto thee
May bring content.' But, shuddering on the air,
The wild cry fell; and through her golden hair
Her face look'd out, as, on a winter's night,
The icy moon looks down through vapours white.
'Come back!' she call'd to that retreating form
Which heard her not; and weird, and wan, and warm,

She craned her neck to note the path he took,
 And sway'd herself, as ways beside a brook
 A lonely willow on a breathless day ;
 And with her lips she made as she would say :
 'I was thy faithful wife, though wed in sport
 As wives were wedded once, in Arthur's court.
 Yet heed my plea ! Two hearts are knit in one
 In my poor frame.'

But utterance found she none ;
 For, ere ecstatic she could shape the words,
 And waft them forth, as Summer wafts the birds
 For joy, for memory, or for grief's control,
 Her face convuls'd, and o'er her tottering soul
 The storm-cloud burst ; and tears shut out the light."

One of the most perfect passages in the whole poem, both for beauty of description and richness of simile, is the opening of Canto second :

" Again the spring-time with its songs of love
 Had come and gone ; again the cooing dove
 Had dropp'd its plumes in moulting ; and the wren
 Had rais'd anew its arbor in the glen,—
 Its dome-like nest, whereof the wondering breeze
 Had late espied the threshold through the trees.
 Again the waves of the advancing seas
 Had storm'd the coast with shouts of loud acclaim,
 What time the winter-wind, in ocean's name,
 Had hurl'd defiance ; and the queen of heaven,
 The maiden moon, entranced or in a swoon,
 Had paced the sky, from autumn unto spring,
 Unclaim'd of men, uncrown'd of any king,
 And only lov'd aright by loveless maids.
 And once again the rapture of the glades,—
 The rout and revel of the spring-decades,—
 Had fill'd and thrill'd the air with such delight
 As makes a tourney of the day and night
 When gale confronts with gale at equinox,
 And all the cliffs, and all the sea-ward rocks
 Have thuds of joy ! Again the forest yearn'd
 For sight of summer, and the roses burn'd
 On many a hedge, whereon the mounting sun
 Had flung his trophies ; for the world had won
 Full right to cling thereto, as—for a feast—
 The crown'd Apollo leapt from out the East.
 Earth and the sky had call'd him ; and the land
 Had smiled, expectant ; and the ocean-strand
 Had bared her bosom to his proud caress ;
 And wind and wave had counted tress on tress
 Of his long hair, and made a chant thereof,
 Warm, ay ! and wanton as the songs of love
 Which sibyls sing. And now the breezes crept
 From rock to rock, where overnight had slept
 A white sea-fog, and where, in summer days
 The blue hare-bell would sound the Maker's praise
 In silvery chimes, unheard but guess'd aright
 By wandering bards. The hill was all alight
 With blazing furze, that keeps the sun in sight,
 And seems to thrill with sunshine after dark ;
 And, far away, the lilting of the lark,
 The prophet-bird, the singer of the dawn,
 Invested Heaven, as if its mate had gone
 Straight through the sky and must be ravish'd back."

The last three lines are particularly lovely. No better expression could be found for the exultant melody of the lark than its song "*invested Heaven*"—a Keats-like idea, inasmuch as in common with so many exquisite similes of Keats, no other can be found to describe the poet's meaning with such full and absolute directness. We find the same happy turn of thought in the description of:

"The blazing furze, that keeps the sun in sight,
And seems to thrill with sunshine after dark."

In the second part of the poem the broken-hearted Gladys comes back to the scene of her too brief love-dream, bringing with her her child, and the reader is gradually led up to the sorrowful climax of this idyll in verse. The deliberate self-slaughter of the wronged and unhappy girl is finely and delicately treated, and there is a true touch of nature in the hesitation with which, while hastening to her own death in the devouring sea, she pauses for one instant, shrinking back in a purely womanish fear:

"She staggered from the wave
That reel'd about her like a rolling grave,
And swerv'd aside to give it passage clear.
'Oh God!' she mused, half palsied in her fear,
'I have o'erstepped my doom; and now for this
I shall be tumbled in the seething hiss
Of tides tumultuous, and a Nothing be,
A wide-eyed Nothing on the doubtful sea!'"

But the saving emotion of timidity passes, and she steadily advances to her chosen doom:

"Therewith she met the breakers' dark advance
Which seem'd to tilt and tower at her askance.
And one of these assail'd her with the shocks
Of foam-fed wrath, and hurl'd her at the rocks
And dragg'd her forth, low-gurgling in the strain
Of imminent death, and roar'd at her amain;
And made more havoc of her shining hair
Than lovers' hands which murder while they spare: .
Wild wanton, hands of woosers like the one
For whom, to-day, unkiss'd beneath the sun,
She fronted Fate. A lily in a stream
Might do as much, a love-bird in a beam
Of mid-day light might thus resist a storm!
The curl'd up waves o'er-canopied her form
And then submerged her. But she rose anew,
Prone on her back, aghast, and pale of hue,
And out to sea, a lifeless thing, and mild,
With oozing lips and eyes that ever smiled,
She slowly drifted, soon to face the stars,
And soon to front the moon athwart the bars
Of feathery cloud and opal-tinted mist;
But nevermore on earth should she be kiss'd,
And nevermore be touch'd by baby hands,
And nevermore be seen in any lands!"

Were "*Gladys the Singer*" by Alfred Lord Tennyson, or Obscurity Robert Browning, we should hear much more of it,

nay, perhaps too much. It would be cabled line by line to New York through the enterprise of some go-ahead Yankee editor, and the foolish fashionable world would rave about it in their usual orthodox and meaningless manner. But it is to be remembered that none of our very greatest poets have ever been made the subject of a "craze" except perhaps Lord Byron, and that for a short time only, and more on account of the various scandals concerning his private life than for admiration of his genius. The chief fault to be found with Eric Mackay's latest production is its dedication, for by the way this is worded, we fear our new poet is a Browning worshipper, in which case he will most assuredly nip the bud of his fame with a most untimely frost. One cannot idolize Browning and remain clear-witted; and clear, sonorous, sweet music is what the true lovers of poesy long for in these cloudy and morbid days. Had our author laid his melodious "Gladys" at the feet of Tennyson, we should have thought better of him, and better still had he left the work undedicated altogether and allowed it to stand entirely on its own merits, which are great enough to win the admiration of the public, to whose decision, after all, the best poets need only appeal in order to obtain an instant and even grateful hearing if they are content to wait with patience for the final verdict. And Eric Mackay must surely know by the ever-increasing sale of his "Love-Letters" that the actual *people* of this land are listening to his songs, and with that vast voice of approval on his side, he surely does not need the patronage of Browning, who himself is a seeker of patronage through the medium of his "Society." The author of "Gladys" needs no such advertisement of his claim to attention,—his utterances are from the full heart of Song, and therefore must needs awaken responsive music in the heart of Humanity. We should think few women can read the exquisite "Vox Amoris" (included in the "Gladys" volume) without their pulses beating more quickly than usual to the dulcet notes of that passionate pleading, such pleading as seems fitted for a Romeo's wooing and Juliet's answer. Verses like these are not written every day:

"I will acquaint thee with mine inmost thought,
And teach thee all I know, though unbesought,
And make thee prouder of a poet's dream
Than wealthy men are proud of what they seem.
If thou have trust therein, if thou require
Service of me, or song, or penance dire,
I will obey thee as thy belted knight
Or die to satisfy thy heart's desire."

* * * * *

"All that I am and all I hope to be
Is thine till death; and though I die for thee
Each day I live, and though I throb and thrill
At each returning touch, for good or ill
Of my dark hour, I revel in the same;
Yet am I free from hope as thou from blame.
And all around thee, wakeful and in sleep,
I weave a blessing for thy soul to claim."

We understand that this particular poem is only one of several similar lyrics of love which are destined for early publication under one distinctive title, and we can only say that if all are equal to the "Vox Amoris," English literature will be greatly enriched by the forthcoming new volume. In conclusion, if we may be permitted to proffer a word of advice to the new troubadour, who has advanced in the very lists of love to sing with new vigour the old, old story of ever enthralling interest, we would suggest that he keep strictly to his own particular gift of inspiration; he should not condescend to delineate, even in the faintest colours, ignoble phases of character. The heroine of his best moments is a fairy among women,—a dainty, delicate, ethereal creature, ravishing to read of and to think of, a "paragon of maids," whose "mouth is constant to its morning prayer," and he is quite out of his element when he tries to depict the impure and lascivious *demi-mondaine* suggested in "Medusa's Hair." Again, though his "Choral Ode to Liberty" is very stirring and noble, and is by far the best thing the Americans have ever had written for them concerning their much boasted freedom, still, we prefer the "Love-Letters Man," as a well-known lady leader of society calls him, as a love-poet *pur et simple*—a "Minnesinger"—of the devout, chivalrous and earnest type, for whom his lady's hair is the sunlight, her eyes the morning, her lips the sweetness of all the world, her love the sanctification of life and the pleasure of death. As such our new minstrel has come before us,—as such we frankly welcome him,—as such we desire him to go on singing,—and as such, in due time, he will win his place among the immortals. For from Love springs all the music of life,—and only those poets who can set our hearts throbbing to that eternal and exquisite melody are, in the end, crowned with the clear glory of inextinguishable Fame.

EDWARD STANISLAS LESLIE.

AT A MONTH'S END.
LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF A MAN OF THE TIME.
A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By BERTHA THOMAS,
AUTHOR OF "THE VIOLIN PLAYER," "PROUD MAISIE," ETC., ETC.

PART II.
CHAPTER I.

THE CAPTAIN SPEAKS.

CONINGTON COURT, September 12.—Often enough during the past month I have found my thoughts running on the Listers and Conington Court. The short break has not impaired the interest of this acquaintance, chance and slight though it is, and dissociated from every other tie. Curiosity must be a powerful incentive to companionship. Had the Listers been my oldest friends I should scarcely have felt more, and might have felt less, willing to revisit their hermitage than when this afternoon I alighted at a small station some three miles off. Jack met me on the platform, and outside stood the Conington pony-chaise with Ella holding the reins. She signified to me to take the seat beside her. Jack and my portmanteau got in behind, and we drove off.

The *enfant terrible* strikes me as agreeably changed; I observe in her an added animation, as though a more brilliant and becoming light had been turned on her beauty; and her manner, though original to say the least, is rather less brusque and more prepossessing. Coquetry is too foreign to her nature ever to be implanted there, any more than music in the constitutionally unmusical. But what is perceptible and new is a frank desire to please, arising from a natural longing to atone to "Lanerton Lee" for past rudeness to Hubert Lane, that compels you to meet it half way. So much concession was unexpected, and Ella on her good behaviour a fresh study. We were approaching Conington before—whilst merrily discussing such mighty matters as the pony's paces and the shower that threatened to break—I made the silent reflection that that cloudless young face, radiant eye, laughing mouth (Ella has a delightful mouth and laugh, but no

smile), bespoke a free and heedless mind that had experienced no sort of grave shock or trouble since last I saw them. I lost all patience with Captain Lister. It is criminal, simply, to keep the girl so long in the dark, and perfectly well he knows it. He could not look me in the face as he met me in the hall.

Ella, only, of the young people dined this evening. She came down looking uncommonly handsome in black with jasmine flowers in her hair—a young queen of night—*Astrifiamante*. Her mood was brilliant and talkative, and when the fit is on her her society is charming. Although imperfectly educated and perfectly ignorant of the world—perhaps because of these deficiencies—her remarks have that directness and originality which incessant friction with miscellaneous minds so commonly destroys. In her elation she never noticed how far were her uncle and aunt from sharing her high spirits. The evening was wet and we played round games by a cheerful fire. Ella's holiday humour spread to her cousins—to us all—but the contrast between appearances and realities at Conington struck me uncomfortably, and when the ladies and children had retired Lister invited me to smoke with him in the dining-room. I taxed him with his inexcusable continued shilly-shally and dissimulation.

"You have not yet broken the bad news to your niece," I said.

"But all the others know," he urged in shuffling apology. "They have taken it very well indeed."

"But Miss Ella Lister knows nothing?"

"Not yet. The fact is we dare not tell her. Every day her aunt resolves and half promises, then shrinks from breaking the ice. We hoped the truth would ooze out through the children, but they keep the secret as close as wax—of their own accord. They feel as we do about her. We all dread the effect on one of her temperament."

Provoked, I asked him sarcastically:

"Pray, do you intend to wait till you begin packing up to let her know of your intention of leaving Europe?"

"Well, it may prove to have come to that," he confessed with incredible cool jauntiness and calm; "but for this, at least, I am not to blame. Only yesterday I had a communication asking if I could make it possible to push forward our movements, as the deputy who is temporarily discharging the duties of the appointment has fallen seriously ill. In that case we may have to sail three months earlier than I told you—in October, in short. Personally I shall be delighted. Hanging on here when everything gets known will be very unpleasant. If only the affair with Ella were over!"

I tried not to look the contempt I felt for the shifty, weak mind that having caused the calamity now shirked the merited

reprobation. I felt glad Ella was no Griseldis—one to take wrong for right when coming from her male relations.

"I shall have to tell her myself," he said with mournful heroism, "but I would rather take hold of a red-hot iron."

"Don't let imagination make a coward of you," I said. "What on earth do you apprehend?"

"She might do something desperate," he muttered with vague uneasiness.

"Jump out of the window or take laudanum? Who ever heard of a young lady breaking her heart because her home was broken up? Girls are born to have their homes broken up. All must when they marry. If you are afraid of a scene"—this was the literal truth—"well, women's words and women's tears soon exhaust themselves. Come, look upon it as a light price to pay for past imprudence."

He shook his head. "You don't consider my sympathy with what she may suffer."

"She must learn to suffer, if she is to live. As for this blow, however deeply she may feel it, be sure she will get over it."

I purposely made light of the matter to entice the man, as he would not be driven, into doing his duty.

"You are quite right," he said at last. "I will speak to her to-morrow," and he added, "she is under no necessity to share our exile. There is another home always open to her with an invalid aunt at Brighton, who to my certain knowledge would be ready to receive Ella if she preferred to leave us. We should miss her terribly! Still, she must choose for herself."

"There," said I, "the situation is not so alarming if you face it."

"Not so alarming!" he repeated, laughing nervously. "To-morrow morning I shall tell her. It was weak to procrastinate. It is entirely my fault."

Of course it was. But there was something conscience-relieving in so magnanimous an acknowledgment, and with it on his lips Lister walked off quite happily to bed.

The coward has waited for my coming, I am convinced, to go through the ordeal, trusting to my presence in the house, as an honoured guest, to restrain the exhibition of feeling in her that he dreads, or to give him the courage of shame!

Conington, September 13.—Whether from these causes or a timely fall of the temperature—there had been almost a water-spout in the night—or the dismally wet day that followed, making even Conington look like a spot you might quit without keen regret, something braced the captain's nerves and screwed up his courage to the needful point. When after a quiet morning's work in the library I joined the luncheon party, I understood from the cast-down countenances of all that the interview had come off. Ella did not appear. Dead silence, broken by fits and starts of

conversation, when the still melancholy became too oppressive, prevailed during the meal. There was no call for reserve on my account; and once pale Mrs. Lister raised her mild eyes to her husband's and asked faintly:

"How did she take it?"

"Don't talk of it," was the hasty rejoinder. "It was far worse than even I had expected."

I was not sorry to escape from the family gloom to the shelter of the library, where, selfishly absorbed in trying to decipher the faded marginal notes in a curious volume, I forget the troubles of the household.

Towards four I was roused by the opening and shutting of the door. Turning, I saw Ella standing there, looking pale and unstrung, like some one under the effect of a nervous shock, such as being flung from a carriage or seeing a passer-by run over. Constrainedly she spoke—a sentence evidently framed beforehand.

"Mr. Lane, my uncle has been saying things to me I do not understand. He declares he has squandered his whole fortune and is obliged to leave the country"—her version (the correct one), but hardly Captain Lister's, I imagine. "I must know," she continued, "if this is true. If he has really done all this how can I trust his word, his account of things? I ought not to believe him."

"Your uncle has been unfortunate," I said moderately. "So long as any hope remained of retrieving his disasters he concealed the facts from you, from kind though mistaken motives. His fear of distressing you has kept him silent till further silence was impossible."

"Then it is all true?" she repeated emphatically, regarding me fixedly. The fact for her was all, and so overwhelmingly much, that his withholding of it sank into insignificance as the merest particular.

"It is true that he has lost money, and that, in consequence, he has consented to accept an excellent colonial appointment—under the circumstances perhaps the best thing he——"

She cut me short, saying "Thank you," as if I had imparted some geographical or historical fact, and left the room immediately, with well but clearly feigned composure.

I had to abandon the attempt to resume my cataloguing; my thoughts wandered, their current broken. Poor girl!

I am furious with the captain. He has forfeited his niece's regard, as he deserves. Folly, to treat her as a child who is a child no longer. I was feeling painfully impressed by the whole thing—unaccountably so, for, after all, these family affairs are no concern of mine.

Ella did not show herself again. She had locked herself into her room, said her cousins, after dinner. No one ventured to

molest her there. One knows what will—must happen. The violence of her agitation will exhaust itself very quickly. A spell of dull depression will ensue, after that, the force of habit, natural routine—much stronger in the end than passion—will reassert itself and she by degrees become herself again.

But till then a dead weight—a black shadow—rests on the family circle. The void is intolerable. Neither prospective poverty nor expatriation have affected them individually so much as the shock Ella's feelings have received from the news.

"She refuses to go abroad with us," her uncle told me to-night when we separated. "I asked if she really preferred to go to her aunt at Brighton. She said 'Certainly.' I could not pressher to alter her mind. But we shall miss her sadly."

How can family tyrants ever cease to exist, whilst whole households voluntarily embrace slavery to one member? Here are the Lister family, without exception, deploring their coming emancipation from the thralldom of Ella's will!

September 15.—That girl will give trouble. She is bent on making her presence felt—on straining her home influence to disturb and torment up to the end. She is full of surprises. The last bit of freakish behaviour I shall not immediately forget.

Yesterday morning passed, bringing no sign of Ella. She had not gone to bed at all, Miss Lister told us at breakfast, and had been seen to go out quite early. Long solitary walks were no new pastime of hers, and nobody showed surprise at her erratic conduct. Only when luncheon time passed and she did not come in her aunt and uncle began to look uneasy. It was raining hard. She would catch her death, remarked the captain. Privately, I thought that a long trudge through the lanes in the soaking rain might prove an excellent antidote to over-excitement. "She will come in at sundown," I thought, "very wet, very muddy, very tired, very hungry, and very cross; sleep very soundly, wake to-morrow to her sober, practical self—and lead her uncle a life for the next three weeks. He will have his deserts."

Dusk came on early. At tea-time Lister, who had been reconnoitring from an upper window, announced that there was a high gale blowing out at sea. He was getting seriously anxious about Ella.

"She has probably taken shelter in some cottage," I said.

"There are none hereabouts beyond the village."

I thought their uneasiness exaggerated, their fears imaginary.

"I'll engage she is hiding somewhere in the ruins," I said. "She wants to frighten you. Come," I suggested to the boys, "let us go and find her out and persuade her to come in to tea. You know her haunts."

In the ruins she was not. We next proceeded a little way down

the lane beyond the village in the direction of the sea. To us males in mackintoshes the drizzle and heavy roads mattered little, but it struck me that the truant, if, as I suspected, her object were to give her relatives a scare, would find the game hardly worth the candle.

About a mile onward we met a coastguard and questioned him. He had seen Miss Ella, about half-an-hour ago, he told us, trying to cross the sands from Mariners' Cove. He had just crossed them himself, but the sea was running high, the tide sweeping in; and he had shouted from the top of the cliff to warn her to turn back and not make the attempt. She had turned back and begun climbing one of the hill-side paths leading up the cliff. If we walked on we should meet her for sure.

We neared the coast cliffs without meeting any one. Halfway down the steep grassy slopes a footpath led on for a mile or more, running irregularly—now high, now low—till at Mariners' Cove it wound down to the shore of the bay.

"She'll have stopped to rest down in the cove," opined Jack; "there are plenty of shelter places under the rocks."

The way there was the Listers' favourite stroll, a walk they had often taken me in fine weather, when the marbled pinks and greys of the rocks, contrasting with the green overgrowth, the gorse, briars, fern and ivy that covered the hill-side, the sea view, the fir-trees in the rifts of the line of rocks, offered much to admire. But the path was little better than a sheep track at the best, and had in places been washed away by the downpour of last night. The rain had ceased for the present, but the struggle to keep one's footing on the steep incline was severe, for the strong squalls of wind that blew from the sea made progress so fatiguing that by-and-by it became as much as the two boys could do to put one foot before the other. They battled on to a point high above the little bay, where we halted to reconnoitre. The tide was rising, the boisterous waves breaking round the jutting headlands on either side.

"Does the sea ever wash up to the cliffs in the hollow?" I inquired.

"Only in the roughest weather," said Jack. "She isn't down there, Mr. Lane, or we must see her."

We shouted without response; but the din of wind and breakers was enough to drown the sound of our voices. The descent was long and stiff and the youngsters were dead-beat, I saw.

"Wait here, you boys," I said, "and get your breath, whilst I run down and make sure she is nowhere about."

Nothing loth they agreed, and I lost sight of them as I tramped down the windings of the rough, straggling path. At every step the havoc wrought by the bad weather called for fresh caution. The path was choked with rocks of stumbling, the clayey soil specially treacherous in overhanging places, where a fall might

involve consequences more than disagreeable, and at one point where it was intersected by a creek running up into a cavern in the rocks, the shaky handrail of the rough wooden construction that bridged the deep narrow gorge had disappeared, only a couple of planks laid across remaining. When after some ten minutes of this I got down to the sands I was half relieved, half provoked, to descry Ella sitting there, safe and sound, in the shelter of a projecting rock. She shrank away as I neared her, my impatience betraying itself somehow, I suppose, for she began hurriedly, as in instinctive self-excuse :

"I was crossing the sands when the tide caught me, and I had to come back ; I was tired and sat down to rest."

"Well," said I, as good-humouredly as I could, "I have come to tell you that your cousins Jack and Bob are above ; we came out to look for you. I hope you will consent to join them and let us see you home."

She made no answer. I repeated my words.

"I have no home," she answered curtly.

"Come," said I, "we need not dispute about terms. Your aunt and uncle grew so uneasy that I and the boys set off to hunt for you. They have kept it up pluckily, but I think they are pretty well at the end of their tether."

"Oh, they are tired, are they ?" she said, absently watching the sea, which was sweeping towards us, sucking in the black masses of seaweed and driftwood that strewed the sands.

"Ella," I said, quite involuntarily driven to try what this unceremonious mode of address, and with it a grave, peremptory tone as of semi-paternal authority would do, "you are behaving like a child. That you should feel the sudden impending break up of your home more deeply than your cousins," I sermonized on, "I understand well, because of the greater tenacity and strength of your nature. But these in their turn should help you to show more fortitude in a misfortune which has arisen through no fault of yours."

I looked her full in the face as I spoke. Her expression, as she listened, with her glance fastened on mine, underwent a singular, though scarcely reassuring change—the hopeless, childish moodiness still settled on her lips, whilst a freakish, unchildish gleam sparkled in her eye.

"Well," she said at length, and rose, faced the hill, and began the ascent. The increasing difficulty and exertion the climb involved she tried determinedly to hide. My offered help was vehemently declined. Yet as I followed in her steps I saw she could hardly get on. Small wonder ; she had not slept that night nor tasted food all day ; the marvel was that she could stand, much more keep her head and foot steady in the gale on the narrow, uneven path. She was perfectly fearless as usual, and perfectly heedless—here, where a false step might mean broken limbs or worse.

Just as we approached the plank bridge over the ravine she tripped in a briar, barely recovering her balance ; her step faltered slightly and she put her hand to her head as if dizzy. It was a dead certainty that she would risk her life sooner than confess that her nerve had failed her. Regardless of the displeasure I should incur, and with no more apology than if she had been a little child, I lifted her in my arms and carried her across. One instant she resisted, but, conscious it was fruitless, suddenly relaxed and lay as if dead in my grasp. Looking down, I thought she had fainted, she was so pale ; then I saw her closed eyes open, a vivid light in them, the omen of some trick of revenge ? Immediately across the creek came a curve in the path, here a mere thread overhanging a steep drop to the rocky shore. The wind came eddying round the point, which had to be passed before I could set her down in security. At that moment Ella made a sudden rash movement as if to spring out of my arms, which all but sent us headlong. I can hear now the startled sound of my voice, saying :

"For God's sake, Ella, be still, or we shall both be over the cliff."

And her reply :

"I should not care."

Distinctly, lingeringly spoken, in a tone vibrating with—impatience, I suppose.

The next instant I landed her on safe ground. The path here widened, and we walked on side by side. Suddenly resuming, I hardly know why, for the last ebullition did not look like docility, the sermon I began on the sands :

"You are wrong," I persisted, "to take for granted that your young life must be spoilt by the change in your future. A new future may begin for you, which you may make worth what you have lost."

"Oh, I know," she murmured absently, with a smile, the first I remember to have seen on her face. Her voice and manner were softened and subdued, but she appeared to be walking in a dream and bore passively the guidance and help I imposed upon her at slippery and precipitous places. So we presently rejoined her cousins higher up. The colour had come back to her cheek, and she declared she could walk home. By sheer force of will, I believe, she accomplished her purpose, without giving in for a moment till we reached Conington, Ella, naturally, in a state of prostration that almost alarmed her relations. However, this morning she came down to breakfast, having slept off her fatigue, and quite herself again, the open disapprobation and violence of her mood yesterday being replaced by a kind of dignified reserve. Lister breathes more freely, glances stealthily at her, scarcely venturing to believe what appearances seem to denote, that the storm has blown itself out and that the worst is over. Somehow

its violence is arrested, they thank God for that, and ask no questions.

To speak for myself, a thing or two might start a conjecture, but that with this girl you can be sure of nothing but that, whatever you conjecture about her, she will if she can prove you wrong. The frenzy of excitement that had possessed her all day ere I found her in Mariners' Cove would of itself more than account, of course, for her singular behaviour. Yet the impression remains, half persuaded though I am that it is false, and that a day or two will dispel it.

CHAPTER II.

AWAKING.

SEPTEMBER 18.—Ella is an inexplicable creature, very beautiful and very singular. She keeps my attention continually on the *qui vive*, fascinating it as a curious study, an interesting aberration. Heaven forbid that our English homes should ever be peopled with Ellas, any more than our woods with ocelots and handsome snakes, things to be admired, from a safe distance. And their lot in the conditions of modern society is a hopeless one. Submit to be caged and have their fangs drawn, else to hunt or to be hunted to the end—bitter end for somebody. Or is fancy playing me a practical joke? Possibly. And yet—

Is she really the simple, unthinking girl that as a matter of course one would presuppose, treating her accordingly? Whose fault is it, mine or hers, that I have come to ask myself the question?

This afternoon, whilst exploring the ruins with the whole tribe, I took Ella to task, aside, for the fool-hardy gymnastic feats she delights in to the torment of her unfortunate aunt and cousins, prophesying that short though the time left her now, she would infallibly contrive to break her neck before she had done with Conington Court.

"Should you mind?" she said abruptly, as in play, the savage play she enjoys, adding quickly, "If I thought so, I would——"

"Hush," said I, laying my hand lightly before her mouth to check the coming threat. She was not angry. Directly she has succeeded in thoroughly provoking my impatience by her childish ways she relaxes into the mock submission of one who has gained a victory.

September 19.—She puzzles, enchants, and repels me all at once, as I think she is perfectly aware. I am frank to rudeness with her besides. It should be clear to her by this time that I neither like nor approve of her *naturel*. This may be unalterable,

or she may be careless to please; the idea of curbing it for that purpose is the last to enter her head for a moment.

She has decided beauty. It impressed me distantly at first, like the picture of a handsome face, but its charm comes out on a nearer intimacy, instead of diminishing, as with those accustomed to make constant parade of their personal advantages. But I could declare that hers have really increased, an added bloom and life drowns what appeared childish and unfinished in her countenance, so fresh and bright that its want of gentleness is unfelt.

She talks quite coolly of the coming family dispersion. Having once accepted the break up as inevitable, her impatience would hasten it on. She takes pains to impress on her uncle how disagreeable it is for him to remain at Conington now that the extent of his reverses is becoming known. There is more force in her arguments than she is aware of.

September 22.—The girl has actually carried her point. The Listers have taken berths in the mail boat that leaves Dartcombe on the 1st of October. Lister is really wanted at Dunedin, the ordeal of cross-questioning and condolences from friends and neighbours he is overjoyed to shirk; and there seem no practical hindrances in the way of this rapid flitting. The furniture here belongs to the landlord, his cousin, and will pass, as it stands, to the next tenant, the library excepted, the sale of which I am negotiating for him with a London firm. He has asked me to oblige him by seeing it through, a small return I am glad to make for his courtesy, to which as a book collector I am inestimably indebted. Thus my visit has been prolonged a few days. With the library off his hands there is nothing to detain him at Conington. But this pressing on of the move is all Ella's doing. She will stay with them till they go; and I daresay that to a proud girl, like her, the comments of the curious Conington gossips and, above all, the compassion of people she has looked down on all her life would be felt quite unendurable. She has made her own arrangements to leave on the same day, but for Brighton. They all admire her fortitude. I cannot perceive that it costs her anything. You would say she had become suddenly, absolutely, unaccountably indifferent to what only the other day was a matter of life and death. If I were her relations I should prefer storms and sulks to this miraculous *insouciance*. But easily transplantable themselves, they thankfully accept the miracle of her conversion with no more than a transient wonder. It has fired my curiosity more than once, I confess.

Her behaviour when, which is seldom, we are alone is increasingly whimsical. She has come to monopolize a good deal of my time—so much appears from this diary. Well, I take care to remind myself, a dozen times a day, that it would be the part of a blackguard to play with the feelings of a young girl, so isolated and so inexperienced that her romantic imagination made of

"Lanerton Lee" the object of a frank, exaggerated hero-worship, of which it appears the shortcomings and inferiority of Hubert Lane have yet left some sparks alive. So I shroud myself in reserve. Then at other times her capricious demeanour upsets all considerations of the sort, making them seem utterly superfluous. And now at the close of my visit—the day after to-morrow I leave for Dartcombe—when I retrace actually all that has passed between her and myself, the only natural interpretation to put upon it is a perfectly insignificant one. And I think I may say unequivocally that I have preserved a mask of severity, of austerity, though under much stronger temptations to let it drop, than some one has any idea of. To do otherwise would have been to mislead her seriously as to my sentiments, which here would be a cruel piece of dishonesty—a thing a man stops short of when he can. After all there is no harm done if she should set me down as a prig or a Puritan.

Dartcombe, Sept. 30.—The truth—did I ignore it? Hardly: say rejected it, for its monstrous improbability. Even now, when I recall the scene, I could swear it must be a trick of memory and sense.

During the last days of my visit Ella now and then invaded the library, where I was still at work. She seldom spoke except when addressed, but moved noiselessly about, collecting bits of book-property of hers from the shelves where the modern literature was now ranged decently and in order. Her company did not conduce to industry, as she must have seen; yet I did not protest, nor was it mere politeness that deterred me, as she may have seen also. Her presence occupies you, like a riddle that haunts you till you know the key. What did Nature mean by her? No vestal, not Dian herself, more haughtily fastidious, self-reliant, inviolable in her exalted and unyielding pride—pride that refuses to make that compromise with circumstances we have mostly to make sooner or later. Something of a boy's straightforwardness and narrow line of vision, with, underneath, a woman's passionate heart and ardent imagination.

No wonder the old poets must invent dryads and mermaids—half human things, as we understand humanity, mythical counterparts of freaks of human nature such as this.

On the afternoon of the 25th—my last at Conington—as I was finishing in the library, she came in. My pen rested on the paper, but my eyes and consciousness did nothing but follow her, as she moved lightly about the room, restored a book to the shelf, took some dead roses from a vase and replaced them by some fragrant sprigs of daphne she gathered from the flowering shrub that grew close up to the open window. I had only a few notes to fill in, but I blotted and made mistakes in every line.

"How do you get on?" she asked of a sudden, provokingly.

"Not particularly well," I admitted, laying down the pen.

"I interrupt?"

"Perhaps."

"You are very easily distracted. Yes; I know."

"How do you know?"

"I read it in the papers. When you want to begin a new novel you betake yourself to a desert island."

"That is a figure of speech."

"Well, to an undiscovered *châlet* you call 'Seulette,' on the Normandy coast."

"Let me assure you the post comes there regularly."

She frowned impatiently at the contradiction, saying, "I suppose, then, solitude everywhere now is a pretence—a figure of speech as you said."

"Quite the contrary. From the best beaten tracks a few steps often take you into a wilderness. So with my hermitage. Certain near—not too near—seaside resorts draw to themselves all visitors to the neighbourhood. 'Seulette' might lie within a charmed circle, it could hardly be safer from intruders."

"Have you no friends there, no neighbours?"

"None but a few peasants, who class me as a *savant* because I bring home plants and bits of rock occasionally. I hold the *châlet* under another name, for greater security, and need fear no disturbing influence, native or foreign."

"Are you fond of the place?"

"Very. I hope to go there shortly."

"When?"

"In five or six days' time, perhaps. About when you leave Conington. Boats go to France from Dartcombe as well as to New Zealand. There is one on the evening of the 1st, by which I am inclined to leave for Normandy."

"To write there?"

"I suppose so."

"About a Devonshire family of foolish girls and boys?"

"And a proud fire-side queen," said I rallyingly, "who ruled them all."

"Dethroned!" she said, with mock earnest, adding carelessly,

"Well, after all, what was the kingdom worth?"

"Neither more nor less than most human possessions," I said, perversely, since I had made light to her of the change and the loss.

"Sure of that?" she said, with sudden insinuating banter and a look of laughing, audacious defiance very hard to meet.

"You are quite unaccountable," I said. "With most persons we can foretell in some slight degree how this and that will strike them, and what they will do next. But you—you remind me of those wild young women of Russian romance, the Vilas and Russalkas—'children of the hills, cradled in the green leaves, rocked by the winds, refreshed by the dews'—if their poets are to be trusted—

and as apart from the world of men and women as the forest creatures—the squirrels and falcons themselves. Who knows from one moment to another whether you will laugh or cry, speak or be silent, coax or strike? Not I.”

“You think about it sometimes?” she said, low, and with an earnestness that forced me to look up at her. She was leaning her arm on the table, her head on her hand, in a listening attitude. Her glance, eager and penetrating, made me forget what I was going to say. I looked long, much too long, before replying—long enough for her to draw from me the words she wanted.

“You know I do. Most often you make it impossible for me to think about anything else, my young Russalka!”

“Say that again,” she said with a quick backward movement of her head, and turning to me fully a face suffused with extreme exultation that had yet no touch of tenderness in it.

Instead, I rose disturbedly and paced the room. She sprang up with a laugh and a scornful:

“Ah! you are afraid.”

“Of you? Very likely,” I answered at random.

“No; not of me—but—”

With this mysterious monosyllable on her lips she left the room.

I don't know if I was most longing or dreading to see her again. Characteristically she kept out of sight, making only fleeting appearances in the family group, taciturn and pre-occupied. When next morning I bade the Listers a cordial farewell she was nowhere to be found. They made excuses for her incivility—her forgetfulness, they supposed—and I left at the height of perplexity.

Here I have been for four days at Dartcombe, in a state of mental derangement that hitherto has kept me even from writing my journal, rigidly resisting the impulse that would draw me over to Conington, on the plausible but utterly false excuse of one or two matters still unattended to in the library, whose keepership and whose key I hold. The mail steamer lies in the harbour that is to take the Listers from England to-morrow. They will come over early to start Ella on her journey to Brighton before they go on board. I have written to Lister, wishing him good speed, and have told him that when they are well on their several ways I shall go over for a last look at the library and to give up the key.

(To be concluded.)

WILD ROSES.

By G. BUTT.

How sweet the scent of roses was,
How soft the summer air ;
The breath of June, like incense, seemed
To touch us unaware.
I held the branches as you passed,
That swung against your knee !
The roses only touched your cheek,
The thorns were all for me !

So sweet again, the incense rose,
After that perfect June,
When the dead petals on the grass
Lay drifting, ah, so soon.
You trod them with your careless feet,
You brushed them from your knee,
Leaving the leafless branches bare,
And all the thorns for me !

Thus Junes will come and sweetly go,
And roses bloom and fade,
Leaving their petals on the grass
When all the debt is paid !
You have forgotten all our dreams—
So best ! so let it be !
I will not grudge the rose to you
Who left the thorns for me !

A FALSE START.

By HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF "BREEZIE LANGTON," "BAD TO BEAT," "THE OUTSIDER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XLI.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

EXCITEMENT in Etshowe ran high that morning. It was pretty well known, two hours after daybreak, by the garrison that Maurice Enderby had been dispatched to carry a message to the relieving column. Would he get through? was the question at that moment in all men's mouths. They would soon know now. Had not Captain Chamberlain said that if Mr. Enderby won his way through safely the heliograph of their friends would be easy to understand. At length the well-known flashes were once more discerned, and from those entrusted with the signalling suddenly came forth a ringing cheer. Even the veteran commandant's stern features relaxed as he said, "Read it out to them, Chamberlain, read it out."

"Shall be with you to-morrow, Enderby safe!" and then the cheer of that small party on the ramparts in charge of the signalling was re-echoed by the throats of the whole garrison, who knew now that their wearied leaguer was over, and that they should henceforth meet the foe in the open. Full rations were served out immediately, and the whole garrison perked up and discussed jauntily the likelihood of their commencing the offensive and of making a sharp sortie to assist their deliverers.

Maurice meanwhile had made his report to the general commanding, who had quickly decided what to do. Finding there was no immediate necessity for reaching Etshowe that night, he determined to advance leisurely, searching the ground on his front and on his flanks rigorously as he proceeded. He felt very little doubt that he should have to fight the Zulu army before he reached the fort; it should be to-day if they chose, but if not he intended to join hands with the Etshowe garrison on the morrow, though all Zululand stood in his path.

"You have done your mission very well, Mr. Enderby," he said, as Maurice finished his narrative; "and now after your riding for your life to get out of the place you will have to take a turn with

us and fight your way in again. You say you saw no large bodies of the enemy?"

"Mere pickets, sir, about thirty in the first instance and not more than six or eight in the second, but we had little doubt at Etshowe that the besieging force had been withdrawn to meet you, and from what I saw, I should say you would come across them some five or six miles from here;" and then Maurice was dismissed in charge of an aide-de-camp, who contrived to furnish him with a tolerable breakfast, which went far to cement their acquaintance.

The camp broke up, and the long column crept cautiously along the track, covered by a cloud of skirmishers with a rocket-troop and horse artillery. Right and left flew the rockets, while the shells dropped here and there into the mealie fields, and now and again into the long grass, and as they crept on it became speedily apparent that, although carefully masked, the enemy were in considerable force in front of them. They did not like the shells, still bore them with tolerable equanimity, but the rockets seemed to demoralize them, and more than once considerable numbers broke from their cover and retreated with more rapidity than military etiquette sanctions.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the general as he caught sight of a strong body of the dusky foe retiring in a manner that almost savoured of flight. "What a dressing we will give these fellows to-morrow morning, if they will only stand. Signal to Etshowe to make a sortie in their rear as soon as the sound of our guns tells them we are thoroughly engaged."

Steadily the advance continued, the Zulus retiring before them as they pushed onward. That the enemy was in considerable force there could be little doubt. He was evidently extremely anxious to conceal his numbers. The rockets and shells here and there forced small bodies to abandon the cover and discover themselves, but it was always very temporarily, and the mass of the foe had carefully refrained from exhibiting itself. Still no soldier could fail to understand that he was driving a large force of the enemy before him, neither routed nor demoralized but retiring leisurely in their own fashion and for their own reasons.

"These fellows don't mean to let us get to Etshowe without fighting," said the general, "but they mean to fight on ground of their own choosing; they can't surely be such fools as to make their stand under the guns of the fort. What do you think, Mr. Enderby," he continued; "can you make any guess where they will fix their stand?"

"Not in the least, sir," replied Maurice, "but, from what I've seen of them, they won't retire much further before they attack."

When they had arrived within some nine or ten miles of Etshowe the general sounded a halt, and, although it was only midday, gave the order to laager and encamp for the night. He confided to his

staff that his men would be all fresh by these means for a night attack, and if the enemy did not think fit to make that he would have a long day before him to fight his way through to the walls of Etshowe. The camp was formed with the greatest possible care. Pickets and scouts were thrown out around it, and the strictest vigilance enjoined on all those whose duty it was to watch. They had had a long afternoon in which to prepare, and, as the general at sundown made his final rounds in person, he felt confident that, in the event of a night attack, his foes would be, so to speak, running their heads against a brick wall.

Maurice stretched himself under a waggon by the side of his new friend, who, curiously enough, turned out to be a younger brother of Bob Grafton. A more light-hearted dragoon than Charlie Grafton never held Her Majesty's commission, and when the two had made each other out they fraternized immediately.

"It's a precious little bit of earth this old planet of ours," laughed the dragoon as he lit his pipe. "If you're only a sociable beggar you can't go anywhere without tumbling over somebody you know. Lord! how often I've heard Bob talk of you. He was never tired of telling the story of Mrs. Enderby's wedding present. But I say, how did you come out here? you were in a very different line the last time I heard of you."

"Yes," said Maurice, as a cloud of smoke rolled from under his moustache, "I started in the wrong groove. Pray don't think I've a word to say against religion simply because I found I wasn't fit to be one of its ministers. As an old friend of your brother's and mine said, 'You may make a dragoon, but you'll never make a parson.' A fellow must be made for something in this world, and I'm trying to see whether he is right."

"Jolliest life out," replied the other, "whether on service or in garrison; but you must get into the regulars, you know. Just at present, I take it, you belong to nothing?"

"No," said Maurice, "I'm a sort of half orderly, half aide-de-camp, with no exact position. However, the chief is very good to me, and usually finds me something to do."

"I suppose you can't guess where these fellows will make their stand?"

"Well, I fancy that they did mean that you should have marched into the middle of them by this, but the general is too old a hand for that. The advance was much too guarded to have fallen into an ambushade. I think, judging from past experience, that we shall hear plenty of them before morning."

"Ah, well! they won't find us asleep, and it ought to cost them pretty dear if they venture to attack the laager. Good-night." And rolling himself in his cloak Charlie Grafton was speedily wrapped in slumber.

Maurice soon followed his example, and, tired out more by the excitement than the fatigues of the day, slept soundly. He was

awoke by a hand being laid on his arm, and looking up found the dragoon stooping over him.

"The word's passed," he said, "to stand to our arms. One or two of the picket have just come in with a message from the officer in charge, to the effect that he believes the enemy to be closing in in force on our front and right flank."

"Let's creep out and have a look at them," replied Maurice, springing to his feet, and in another two or three minutes he and Charlie Grafton had passed without the improvised walls of their temporary citadel, and were stealing along through the rough, coarse grass that surrounded it.

The training of the last few weeks stood Maurice in good stead. He had a keen eye for their subtle enemy, and was quick to detect these dusky warriors, as, taking advantage of every bit of cover, they crept within springing distance of their foes. They had not gone far before he suddenly gripped Grafton's arm, and then, crouching on his knees, whispered—

"Hist! they're coming and no mistake. I'm dreadfully afraid they have got round the picket. I can swear I saw a fellow slip behind that big boulder about fifty yards in front of us. Ah!" he continued, "the game's begun," as three or four rifle-shots rang sharp and shrill on the night air. A hoarse cry of "Stand to your arms," was heard from the laager, and in another instant rapid flashing of the rifles showed that the pickets were in quick retreat all round.

"Come along, we must run for it; we're only in the way out here."

They didn't start a minute too soon, and it was well for them that they had not far to go, for scores of their active foes started from the grass behind them and came bounding forward in pursuit. As they regained the laager, the bugle sounded the "fire," and in another second their side of the square became a blaze of musketry. The Zulus now came on openly and in great numbers. Many of them were armed with rifles, which perhaps rather served to lessen the dash of their attack, insomuch as, understanding nothing about "the sights," their fire was comparatively innocuous, and not so much to be dreaded as the terrible assegais at close quarters. Still, mowed down though they were, they advanced with unflinching resolution; reckless of the deadly rifle fire that decimated them or of the murderous discharges of grape poured in from the guns at the salients, they fought their way determinedly up to the waggons, and sent a very cloud of assegais among the defenders. So determined were their rushes that more than once a small party obtained a footing within the camp, only however to perish to a man.

It was in one of these rushes that Charlie Grafton, who, at the head of some of his dismounted dragoons, had been doing good service on the like occasions, came perilously near making an end

of it. Having emptied his revolver he threw himself, sabre in hand, in front of a gigantic chief who was leading the assault; as he made a furious lunge at his foe his foot slipped, and the Zulu, taking advantage of the accident, sprang within his guard, and, quick as lightning, dashed him to the ground; shortening his assegai, with a fierce yell, he was about to drive it through the prostrate man when Maurice's sabre swung keenly through the air, and the Zulu fell dead over his victim, with a fearful sword-cut in the head. But his followers closed rapidly in upon Enderby, and, ere his own people could interfere, Maurice fell, bleeding and prostrate, across the body of his late antagonist. A few minutes and the luckless Zulus had paid the penalty of their brief success, and the victors had a few minutes' time in which to reckon up their losses.

"This one's got it bad," exclaimed a bluff infantry sergeant as he picked up Maurice and drew him clear of the little ring of killed and wounded; "it's the gentleman who came in from Etshowe; fetch a doctor here some of you; he's grit every inch of him, and has been right in the thick of it all along."

"Confound it! Pull this black brute off the top of me, can't you?" exclaimed a voice somewhat impatiently from close beside them.

"Hurrah, lads!" cried a stalwart young trooper, as, with the assistance of a comrade, he tumbled the dead chief quickly on one side; "it's Mr. Grafton. May I never, sir, but I thought you was done. I could have sworn I saw that big Zulu send his spear right through you!"

"Done be d——d!" replied Charlie Grafton, shaking himself very much after the manner of a small dog who has been tumbled over in the roadside by a bigger of his species; "not but what I should have been if Mr. Enderby hadn't been a little quicker to chip in on my side than you fellows were. Where is he?"

"He's here, sir," replied the sergeant; "but I doubt he's badly hurt."

"By Jove! I hope not," retorted Charlie. "He saved me, and I trust——but here comes the doctor."

Young Grafton was a little fellow gifted with unbounded animal spirits, unflinching pluck, and untiring go. Foremost in every description of sport, and equally keen when it came to campaigning, regarding a "crumpler" after a jackal, a wet bivouac, a wearisome march, and a hard day's fighting, as all in the day's work, and things to be rather laughed at than otherwise. The "irrepressible sub," as his brother officers had christened this vivacious young gentleman, was an immense favourite in his regiment. The men of his troop, whom he was accustomed to address in a polite slang of his own, not in the least warranted by Her Majesty's regulations, would do anything for him, although they could never quite refrain from grinning when he pitched into them

in his racy vernacular, and they were most unmistakably glad now that "Little Cheeky," as they called him, had not come to grief.

Charlie Grafton is silent enough though now. For once his voluble tongue is stilled, and he anxiously awaits what the doctor has to say about this new friend of only some few hours ago. Maurice lies very still; his face pale, and the blood wells fitfully from the wound in his side. Quick as thought the keen surgical scissors rip open his patrol jacket. The surgeon takes a sponge, and gently wipes away the blood.

"An ugly wound," he mutters, "but, as far as I can judge, there is no internal hemorrhage."

"Do you think he'll live?" inquired Grafton anxiously.

"Hard to say as yet," replied the surgeon, "but it doesn't look to me at all a hopeless case. Carry him across to the hospital-waggon at once and then I must set to work to stanch this bleeding. By his looks he should have youth and a good constitution on his side, and that goes for a good deal."

For more than an hour did the Zulus persist in their assault. At last they could stand the punishment so relentlessly dealt out to them no longer, and retired in sullen disorder. No attempt was made to pursue them, and when the day broke the thickly strewn dead showed how terrible the carnage had been, and with what gallantry and recklessness of life the assault had been persisted in. There had been fierce hand-to-hand fighting outside the laager, and the relieving column could boast no bloodless victory. One of the most popular chiefs of the Rifles had fallen while cheering his battalion to victory, and several officers of lower rank, to say nothing of the rank and file, attested to the severity of the struggle.

As the sun rose high in the heavens the heliograph from Etshowe flashed congratulations on the victory, which the garrison had already rightly interpreted from the steady and persistent firing.

"The battle's over," said the Etshowe commandant, who was anxiously watching from his ramparts the angry flashes of the guns. "No savages that ever were could have succeeded against such a continuous roll of musketry as that. The Zulus, gentlemen, will trouble us no longer."

CHAPTER XLII.

THE NEWS COMES HOME.

BESSIE had retired to Tunnleton to spend her temporary widowhood. It was near London and she could count now upon a few staunch friends there; General Shrewster, the Chyltons, and especially the Molecombes, could all be reckoned upon to welcome her kindly. The Praun faction had hardly done rubbing their hands

and chuckling over Maurice's Ascot misfortunes when they were staggered by the intelligence that he had started as a volunteer in the Zulu war, and, though the veterans at first pooh-poohed the notion and declared that more useless lumber than volunteers, who knew nothing of their duties, never hampered a general, yet they were rather put down on this point by one of their own caste. Shrewster had had a turn at the Cape during the Kaffir War and therefore could speak with some authority upon present affairs in Zululand.

"It's all very well to call them live lumber, Praun, but I tell you that any active young fellow who can ride, has a stout heart, a keen pair of eyes, and brains in his head, is well worth his salt out there. I'd ask for nothing better than three or four hundred such fellows as Maurice Enderby to mould into a regiment of irregular horse. They'd be rare scouts at the end of a few months, and, though roughish troopers to look at and of no use opposed to regulars, yet they'd be a valuable contingent in cutting up barbarians like the Zulus."

That the peppery Praun should dissent from this opinion need scarcely be observed, but then he disagreed with most people's, and even at times turned round upon himself. Still, General Shrewster was a man entitled to speak with authority; he had seen, in his time, more hard fighting than either Generals Maddox or Praun could lay claim to, and Tunnleton, as a rule, stood a little in awe of his quiet, self-possessed manner.

As for Bessie, hers was the fate of all women linked to the brethren of the sword. Great Britain, like ancient Rome, is embroiled by perpetual wars. There is always hot water simmering in some of our numerous dependencies; a few lives are lost, and we hardly heed it; it is only when the simmer becomes a boil and the fingers of the cooks who are managing our affairs get grievously burnt, in short when disaster overtakes us and we hurry out all the available troops we can lay our hands on to avenge our outraged authority, that we begin to recognize we are really at war. Bessie's fate was in one respect hard. Her husband was under no orders but had proceeded to the banks of the Tugela of his own free will, and Maurice in this had been guided altogether by General Shrewster's advice.

"The great thing, my dear Enderby, is to be early in the field. Buy such kit as you think desirable, I should suggest the following," and here followed a list of articles such as from his former experience General Shrewster thought might be found useful. "I will forward you two or three letters of introduction to old friends of mine in high position at the front. I am sure they will advance your views and give you every chance. Luck, and your own right hand, must do the rest."

So far Maurice's luck seemed to have terminated with an assegai through his ribs, but this news had not as yet reached Tunnleton.

That the many warriors at the club followed the campaign with close interest may be easily imagined, and if there was one thing irritated these critics it was the tardiness with which the disaster of Isandhlwana was being avenged. They were loud in their condemnation of the military chief out there, and in this respect they differed but little from the press and the rest of the country. The war indeed was beginning to assume proportions in the eyes of the public to which it was by no means entitled, and that the enemy, though numerous and after their fashion disciplined, were unskilled in the use of the rifle and destitute of artillery ran some danger of being forgotten. Our leaders out there were no doubt in some measure afraid to risk their *prestige* till reinforcements should make success a matter beyond doubt.

At length came home intelligence of the relief of Etshowe, and a brief account of the fierce night-attack on the relieving column by the Zulu army which had immediately preceded it.

Bessie had good reason to believe that her husband was shut up in that fort. She knew that he had joined number one column, that he had been taken, as he himself described it, as half orderly, half aide-de-camp, by the officer commanding that force, who was an old friend of General Shrewster's. From himself she had received no letters since, but it was natural to suppose that he had shared the fate of those with whom his lot was thrown. It had taken much to reconcile her to his change of profession, but she had schooled herself to it at last, even to the fact that his only possibility of entering the army was by the way of active service. Even that did not quite come home to her until it came to the saying "good-bye," and then poor Bessie gave way utterly. Still he had promised to write frequently, and that he should be in a position in which it would be impossible to keep his word was a thing she had never dreamt of. At first when his letters ceased she felt sure something must have happened to him; but then General Shrewster pointed out to her that there was no post running from Etshowe, and that till it was relieved it was impossible she could hear.

But by-and-by came fuller details—the graphic account of the battle almost within sight of Etshowe—how want of food was beginning to stare the garrison in the face, and that, in short, had its relief been much longer delayed, its defenders would have had nothing for it but to sell their lives as dearly as they could. There was a long roll of the casualties which had taken place during the siege, and also a list of the killed and wounded of the relieving force, and in neither of these was any mention made of Maurice Enderby.

Besides his wife and his friends there was another person much dismayed at hearing nothing of Maurice, to wit, the impalpable WE, who controlled a leading London journal.

The fresh brilliant letters from "Our Own Correspondent in

Zululand" had just arrested public attention, when, to the editorial disgust, they suddenly ceased. They had not much doubt at the office of the *Heliograph* as to what had become of their correspondent; but then, as the editor testily remarked.

"That's the worst of these young hands. Freshness and real power of description do not compensate for their ignorance of their duties as journalists on the war-path. His first duty," continued this enthusiast, "is to his paper; his queen and his country must for the time be a secondary consideration, and especially should he be careful to avoid getting shut up in such places as Etshowe. A correspondent inside such a city as Paris may be doing good work, but what can there be to tell about the siege of a mere frontier fort?"

Many a mail was destined to pass before the ruler of the *Heliograph* received another letter from Maurice Enderby.

Bessie's first news of her husband came from Bob Grafton. She was astonished one morning by his unexpected arrival.

"I make no apology," he exclaimed, "for darting in upon you at this early hour, but the fact is I am down in the neighbourhood for a few days, and have come to hear the latest news of Maurice."

"I am very, very anxious about him, Mr. Grafton," she rejoined; "I have heard nothing from him since, I presume, he was shut up in Etshowe; and, though it is now relieved, he is still silent. His name, thank heaven! is not mentioned among the killed and wounded. You are staying at Bridge Court, I suppose?"

"Just so," replied Grafton. He was not, but he did not wish Mrs. Enderby to know that he had travelled down from the north expressly to tell her of her husband's mischance. "I can't help thinking, Mrs. Enderby," he continued, "that my news of Maurice may be later than yours. You don't seem to be aware how he has distinguished himself. I had a letter the other day from my brother Charlie. As you know, he is a horse-soldier in those parts, and oddly enough has come across your husband; in short, Charlie is indebted to him for his life."

"His life! Your brother! To Maurice! Pray explain, Mr. Grafton," and Bessie's big brown eyes glistened with excitement.

"The shortest way is to read you Charlie's letter," replied Grafton, "always premising that Charlie, though peculiar in his phraseology, is accurate in the main. He is a sanguine young beggar, and takes life's croppers pretty lightly—now for his letter."

"DEAR BOB,

"If you're not anxious you ought to be about how I am getting on in these parts, and it will soothe your agitated feelings to know that my scalp is not as yet whitening in a Zulu lodge. I don't know that he cared about my scalp, but a very long Zulu most decidedly went for my midriff the other day, and, but for your old friend Maurice Enderby, would have probably extinguished one of the dawning lights of the British army. By Jove! that fellow's

born to good luck. He's done a thing that has set every one's tongue wagging. It seems they were getting rather hard up for grub in Etshowe, and, not being able to understand our signals, they gazetted Enderby honorary postman and sent him forth to tell us to 'hurry up.' Well! dashed if he didn't ride clean through the Zulu army, and come off with only the loss of his horse. It was a plucky thing to do, no doubt; and he showed plenty of head and judgment in doing it, but it was luck after all that pulled him through. Of course, a man who started with half the 'Wandering Nun' as a wedding gift is bound to throw sixes. He had one or two turns up with the Zulus on his way, and, from the little he has said about his ride, they were bad for the Zulus. However, poor fellow, just now he has thrown deuce ace.

"I must tell you how it was, Bob—Enderby told us when he came in, that the Zulus were swarming between us and Etshowe; and that we weren't likely to get there without a fight. Well, we couldn't bring 'em to book all that morning. They kept on retreating slowly before us; and, at last, our general made up his mind to halt for the night and have it out with them the next morning. A little before daybreak they came on like wolves; and, although we rolled them over in scores before they could close, they weren't to be denied. A few of them broke into our laager four or five times, and it was in stopping one of these rushes that your distinguished brother nearly came to grief. He was too big, Bob, and I ought to have left him to some one nearer his own weight; but, in spite of the lickings I used to get at school, I always pique myself upon my science, and thought I could pink the fellow before he could close. That was not destined to be decided, for my foot slipped, and before I knew where I was I was dashed to the ground, saw a spear gleam high in the air, and felt that I was about to be spitted like a cockchafer, when Maurice suddenly chipped in with his sabre, and most obligingly dropped my big friend on the top of me. Being undermost, I saw no more, but conclude it was a sharp and merry mill while it lasted. When it ended, I am sorry to say, poor Enderby was at the top of the heap, having received a very awkward poke in the ribs from one of our black entertainers.

"Joking apart, I am sorry to say that Enderby is seriously wounded. Remember, the doctors by no means say that he will not pull through, but make no disguise about his situation being critical. We have brought him on to Etshowe, where he'll have to stay for the present, but I suppose they'll send him down to Marietzburg as soon as they can move him."

Bessie listened in rapt attention as Grafton read, her eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed at the accounts of Maurice's ride, only to turn pale as death as the next few lines bore record of his being struck down.

"Wounded!" she exclaimed, in a low tone, "in a critical state. I must go to him; Mr. Grafton, you must help me in this. As Maurice's dearest friend you will, won't you? Where is it they are taking him? Marie—Marietzburg. I must go there, and, oh! my God, if I should arrive too late," and here her sobs choked Bessie's utterance.

Like most men, there was nothing discomposed Bob Grafton more than a woman's tears, and it was in somewhat clumsy fashion he set himself to console the stricken woman before him.

"Of course I'll help you, Mrs. Enderby, but you mustn't take that view of it. Men get seriously hurt on these occasions no doubt, but most of them recover and in a marvellously short time too. By the time you reach Marietzburg you will find the only thing the matter with Maurice will be that he cannot get enough to eat. Your convalescents are always very cormorants."

"God grant it may be so," said Bessie, smiling sadly through her tears. "I shall trust everything to you, and you'll lose no time, will you?"

"I'm off to town by the next train," said Grafton, "to take your passage, if possible, in the next ship that sails. Make your preparations at once so as to be in readiness to join me in London as soon as I write to you; and now, for the present, good-bye."

"By Jove!" thought Grafton, "I do hope Maurice is all right. It would be an awful thing for this poor little woman if she should get up to Marietzburg only to find that her husband is dead and she left all alone in the world," and, looking more serious than was his wont, Grafton made his way rapidly to the station.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CONVALESCENCE.

THE sun is pouring down upon the dusty streets of Marietzburg; the queer little colonial town is swarming with a tumultuous, perspiring crowd, wanting apparently everything. In busy search of accommodation for man or beast, of food, of tobacco, and of strong waters; much curiosity manifested, indeed, about this latter, as the military authorities have interposed some restrictions on their sale. Bluff teamsters, with their heavy ox-waggons laden with provisions, wearily working their way to the front; commissariat officers vainly endeavouring to hurry them forward; soldiers striving to discover billets that only exist in their imagination; officers in charge of them hurrying here and there in the endeavour to keep these tired sheep in hand, and also to feed them; a reek of tobacco, a buzz of language more pungent than classical, strange oaths, with a strong flavour of Dutch in them, and athletic blacks lounging about clothed in a sparse caricature of European costume.

Such constitute the crowd that throng the streets of Marietzburg on this summer day. It is much the same as might be written of most towns of which the supplies of an army were being hurried to the front.

For the chiefs of the Cape had been spurred to extra exertion by the recent receipt of telegraph messages from their friends at home. The great democracy of England had risen in its wrath, like that of Athens of old, or like that later sterner democracy which in its death-struggle of nearly a quarter of a century ago changed its generals pretty nearly as soon as they were beaten. There was no more singular feature in the gigantic civil war in America than the rapidity with which the Northern States discarded their unsuccessful leaders. In like manner our military chiefs in Zululand were told by their friends in England that their successors were on their way, that the public were weary of their inactivity, that the English people in these days of telegraphs were impatient of reverses to their arms, unless speedily avenged. It was rumoured that a wire had come to the English general from a distinguished relative to this effect—

“Fight! above all fight! You’d better take a licking than continue this strategy, which is jeered at as an *armed neutrality*.”

That Sir Garnet Wolseley and a band of his favoured henchmen were on their way was well known in the colony. Already the war correspondents had pronounced Zululand the grave of military reputations; one and all, from the general down to the junior brigadier, felt that it was incumbent to strike a fatal blow before the new men came upon the scene. The waves favoured them, and, thanks to the surf at Durban, the victory of Ulundi took place in time to rehabilitate many a bespattered military name.

At a window on the first floor of a sort of half villa, half farmhouse in the suburbs, looking out over the burnt-up rolling prairie ground, sat Maurice Enderby. The pale face and sunken eyes showed that it had gone hard with him, and the thick black beard that now garnished his chin would have made the good people of Tunnleton stare at their late curate. Not that the brethren of the surplice by any means eschew beard and moustache in these days, but Tunnleton was an old-world place full of old-world prejudices, and about a quarter of a century behind the times, and one of its axioms was that its divines should be clean-shaved. Maurice is chafing terribly at his enforced idleness. He knows that he has distinguished himself, but he knows equally well that, if the first step in life is to attract the eyes of the chiefs of your vocation, the second is to keep yourself constantly before them. But no—the doctor says it will be six good weeks before he will be able to take the saddle again; and, what is worse, he feels that it is true.

A light step behind him arrests his attention, and Bessie glides quietly to his side with a tray containing nourishment of some kind. He looks fondly up at her as he says—

"Ah, Bess! if it hadn't been for your nursing I don't think I should have pulled through; and, though I fret here horribly at my enforced idleness, still I don't know if I was well to-morrow what I am to do."

"Do?" she replied, though her voice shook and her lips quivered as she said it. "You would rejoin your old chief, of course."

"Yes, no doubt that is what I ought to do from one point of view; but what's to become of you?"

"Me?" replied Bessie, with a rather forced laugh; "oh, I shall stop here, with my heart in my mouth, so as to be all ready when my services are required again."

Maurice looked at her for a moment, and then said—

"Ah, Bessie, Bessie, you will never make a soldier's wife."

"I don't know about that," replied Bessie, as the tears welled up in her eyes; "I don't think I have made a very bad beginning. I made what you call a forced march out here, and even the doctor says I am a capable nurse."

"Capable nurse!" exclaimed Maurice, "I should think you were indeed. Why the doctor told me the other day that I owed my life to your unceasing vigilance."

"I did my best," she replied meekly, "but, ah, Maurice, after snatching you from the very jaws of death can you wonder that the brine comes into my eyes at the idea of your going to the front again? Stop, let me finish!" she continued, as he was about to speak; "do not think that I wish to dissuade you from it. We made a false start, but you have now begun a new career, and I know that if a soldier is to make his mark in his profession he must not neglect his opportunities."

"Spoken like a sensible little woman," he rejoined, "and you'll promise——"

"Not to be more foolish than I can help," she interrupted; "but, Maurice, I cannot be a Spartan matron, and am afraid I shall always cry a little when you go forth to battle."

"Pooh!" he said, laughing, "you must look upon me as insured. I have been hit once, and the odds are they won't hit me again."

"There's very little consolation in that," she replied, smiling, "but one comfort is, that you're not fit to start yet, and it is possible all this may be over before you are in the saddle again."

"And if it is," said Maurice, a little bitterly, "I shall have come all this way for nothing—and I know now Shrewster was right: I have the makings of a decent dragoon in me."

"Well crowded, Mr. Enderby," said a voice from the doorway; "when men feel that way they are bad to kill, and I'm thinking ye'll do now, but, as for making a decent dragoon, I'd me doubts as to your ever doing that some few weeks back. Ah, Mrs. Enderby, your patient's a credit to you! Feed him, ma'am, feed him with flesh, fowl, and good red wine. All we've got to do now is to re-make the blood the Zulus let out."

"Well, Dr. Gabbet," said Bessie, "he can't complain about that, and he is becoming now a capital patient, for he's always ready to eat."

"It's the way with them all, ma'am; they're always anxious to make up for the time they lost during the fever; but you'll be asking me for news; they are all playing now the game of catch who catch can. There's the general-commanding doing all he can to get up to Ulundi before Sir Garnet Wolseley can join him; there's Sir Garnet doing all he knows to join him before he gets up to Ulundi; and here's Cetewayo doing all he knows to be 'not-at-home' to either of them."

"And how will it all end?" asked Maurice, laughing.

"Well, the deuce a one of them knows! It'll be bad for Sir Garnet if he don't catch 'em, it'll be worse for Thesiger if he is caught, and it'll be worst of all for Cetewayo when they happen to catch him; there ye are, sir, and there's never another man in the colony could have explained the position of affairs so tersely or so clearly as Mick Gabbet, though it's meself says so."

"But as soon as they have got Ulundi it'll be all over, doctor, eh?" said Mrs. Enderby.

"Tear an' ages, ma'am, don't think so manely of the natives! They're like me own countrymen, they can't get on without their diversions, and, as soon as the fighting's done in one place, they just set it going again in another. There's a broth of a boy called Sikukuni who has been trailing his coat these last three years, and we have to polish him off as soon as we have time to do so."

"Ah, that's the fellow we've never succeeded in doing anything with. He's got a tremendous stronghold of his own, I believe, hasn't he?"

"That's just it," said the doctor, with a wink; "we've taken out a judgment summons and tried to put in a 'man-in-possession' a good many times, but he's as hard to deal with as a Galway squire; and now I'm off. Feed him up, Mrs. Enderby, feed him up, and he'll soon be strong on his legs again."

It was dull work this convalescence at Marietzburg, but Maurice shook off his weariness considerably when Dr. Gabbet at length sanctioned his going for a short afternoon ride. From that out the horses came round every afternoon, and, accompanied by Bessie, Maurice indulged in a good canter when the sun began to sink.

And now came the news of the fierce fight of Ulundi, where the Zulus fought their last battle in defence of their capital. That their defeat was crushing, their power broke, their army dispersed, and their king a fugitive, was speedily apparent as the sequence of the victory. Carping critics urged that it might have been done before, and there were cynics who chuckled with amusement because for once Sir Garnet had been too late. But, although the Zulus were effectually conquered, there was plenty of work to be done in restoring order through the land, and it was said pretty openly that

our own troops, flushed with their triumphs and successful campaign, had not yet been able to divest themselves of the idea that they were in an enemy's country, and, though they had recrossed the Tugela, were levying supplies with a high hand. There were rumours, too, of coming troubles in the Transvaal. The Boers, who had never been satisfied with annexation, were holding mass-meetings, at which the speakers once more claimed their independence. Sikukuni, with whom we had been carrying on a desultory war for months, was getting more restless and encroaching than usual. This marauder, who was a sort of South African Rob Roy, displayed laudable impartiality in his raids. Cattle-lifting was apparently his chief industry, and whether they were the cattle of Boers or British owners he never troubled his head to consider. The Boers had striven vainly to cope with him, and all attempts on our part to put him down had so far failed chiefly from the insufficiency of the force employed against him. Every available soldier had been wanted in Zululand, and, though the officer in charge of this suppression had once actually led his small force within a mile of Sikukuni's citadel, yet that pest of South Africa, a murrain amongst the horses, had compelled him to retire. The battle of Ulundi had set free the greater part of the army in Zululand, and Sir Garnet now found himself able to turn his attention to these minor matters, and it was not likely that the chastisement of the marauding Sikukuni would be overlooked.

By this time Maurice was thoroughly restored, and, though he looked a bit pulled down, declared he was as good a man as ever. He had written to his old chief, reported himself quite fit for service, and begging to be allowed to resume his former post on his personal staff, and in due time received a letter which occasioned him no little elation.

"DEAR ENDERBY"—it ran—

"I am delighted to hear you are all right again. When I last saw you outside Etshowe the doctors spoke gravely of your case, and I was sorry to hear that you had a bad attack of fever consequent on your wound afterwards. However, I am truly glad that you are at last safe out of the wood. I should be only too glad to have you back with me, but it is all over up here. Ulundi completely crushed the Zulu nation, at all events for the time. The sole thing doing is the pursuit of Cetewayo, and, though no doubt you would ask nothing better, we have dozens of volunteers for that work, and he will probably be captured before you could possibly arrive here. No; I can do better for you than that; the man who cut his way through the Zulu army is never likely to want employment. I have managed to get you transferred to General W.'s staff, who will be shortly settling with that very troublesome chief Sikukuni. He is just the man to appreciate a bit of dash like yours, and you need never fear you won't see

fighting under him ; he revels in it, and will work his brigade into the thick of it somehow.

"Make your way to him at once ; he's somewhere now, I think, in the neighbourhood of Luneberg ; but he is not the man to dawdle when he has got his force together.

"Good-bye, I wish you every luck.

"Yours sincerely, F. P."

"Your name is mentioned in despatches, and I am glad to say your exploit thought highly of by every one."

At this moment Bessie entered the room. One glance at her husband's delighted face, another at the letter he held in his hand, told her all. She knew that she had again to wish him good-bye.

CHAPTER XLIV.

TUNNLETON CHANGES ITS OPINION.

TUNNLETON was much excited when the story of Maurice's exploit appeared in the papers. That he had gone out as a volunteer to Zululand and that he had been severely wounded, Tunnleton was aware ; that Mrs. Enderby had started at two or three days' notice for the purpose of nursing her husband was also currently known ; but Bessie had seen but two or three of her intimate friends before leaving, and, except General Shrewster and Edith Molecombe, nobody had heard the details contained in Grafton's letters. But Maurice's brother correspondents were proud to put on record such a deed of daring—achieved, too, by one of their guild. Individual heroism is always telling in a war correspondent's letter, and it really was extraordinary the manner in which Maurice had made his way through the Zulus.

There is a great deal of the Pumblechook element about in this world ! and Tunnleton, which not a year ago had cast him out from among them, now almost claimed Enderby as a fellow-citizen. It is astonishing when you have succeeded in this world the number of people who are always convinced you "had it in you." It is true they had kept this knowledge carefully to themselves in the early part of your career, but they remind you of it now you have achieved fame, all the oftener, it is to be presumed, by way of making up for lost time. Tunnleton has quite made its mind now to regard Maurice as one of her own sons, and people vie with each other in exchanging reminiscences of the ex-curate's sayings and doings while resident amongst them. Although a reticent man, General Shrewster could not refrain from crowing a little over the exploits of his *protégé*.

"Aha ! Praun," he exclaimed, "didn't I always tell you young Enderby would make a rattling dragoon ?"

"I don't know that you did," snapped that irascible warrior, "but I am sure that I never said anything to the contrary. I only said that he was guilty of great impropriety of conduct as a curate. There are people," he continued snappishly, "who don't see any harm in gambling and horse-racing—I do," and to avoid rejoinder General Praun left the club morning-room a little precipitately.

It soon further leaked out that the spirited letters of some few weeks back in the *Heliograph* were from the pen of the dashing young volunteer, who had carried the message from Etshowe, and then the Reverend Mr. Jarrow could no longer contain himself. The rector positively glowed with enthusiasm, and in the course of two or three days had thoroughly persuaded himself that he had no little to do with their composition.

"Excellent, sir, so full of fire and vigour. I am proud to think that I first guided his steps in the path of literature; I looked over his early efforts when he was here and gave him the benefit of my advice and suggestions; I lent him the 'Verity Letters' to read, and I don't know—now does it strike you?—but it seems to me that he caught my style a good deal. Now these letters in the *Heliograph* are characterized by a good deal of that vigorous thought and power of sarcasm which you may have observed in my own poor efforts," and the mock humility that characterized the rector as he uttered the concluding words was beautiful to witness.

On one point Tunnleton was unanimous, and that was, in their anxiety to hear tidings of the wounded man. Even those whose tongues had been most bitter against him were desirous to hear he was doing well. There could be no doubt he had done something of which his countrymen might well be proud, and most of us sink our dislikes when their object has come to grief on the battle-field.

A man who, rather to his astonishment, found himself suddenly a person of considerable importance in Tunnleton was Bob Grafton; he was staying for a few days, after his wont, at Bridge Court, and he walked into Tunnleton two or three times to call on Miss Molecombe, General Shrewster, and two or three other friends he had made of late in the little town. He had often walked in from Bridge Court before, and Tunnleton scarcely heeded his presence, in fact barely knew him by sight. But now, much to his surprise, he was constantly stopped by people, strangers to him, anxious to know if he had any news of Mr. Enderby. The first news of Maurice's mischance had come from him, and Tunnleton very naturally thought there was much likelihood of his hearing again—and Tunnleton was right.

It was during his stay at Bridge Court that the next news of Maurice came across the sea, and the letter was once more to Bob Grafton. This time it was Mrs. Enderby who wrote. There was a brief record of her journey out to begin with, and what kindness

she had received in making her way up to Marietzburg ; how she had found Maurice slowly struggling back to life after a severe attack of fever ; how that he was now almost himself again ; and, whether they knew it or not in England, that he was reckoned a hero out there.

"And now, Mr. Grafton," she continued, "comes the terrible hardship of being a soldier's wife. I have nursed him till his step is as firm and his figure as erect as ever it was ; and now he is once more going to bid me good-bye. He has got what he calls another chance, and I suppose he ought to take it, but we poor women know what such chances are, and what a wailing the result of them means to us. I shall bear it, this time, worse than I did before, for the evil I dreaded has already once befallen me, and I shall tremble at the thought that it may do so again. One comfort is, that this time I shall be near at hand should he come to harm. Tell General Shrewster that Maurice is going with a column to beat up Sikukuni's quarters. He is not exactly a Zulu, as far as I can make out, but seems to be an independent freebooter who revels in little wars on his own account ; at all events he has been giving a deal of trouble, and, so far, seems to have got the best of those who have been dispatched to bring him to account. Good-bye. Love from us both to all old friends, especially the Chyltons, Edith Molecombe, and General Shrewster.

"Sincerely yours,
"BESSIE ENDERBY."

An idea flashed across Bob Grafton when he had finished this epistle, and that was, that he could not do better than call upon Miss Molecombe and read her Mrs. Enderby's letter. He had got rather into the way of dropping into the banker's about luncheon time of late, and the Misses Balders rallied him not a little as to what was the attraction in Tunnleton.

Another thing too that was absorbing a good deal of Mr. Grafton's attention at this time was the approaching Leger. It may be remembered that Grafton had made arrangements on Maurice's behalf for the Ascot settling. Enderby had let no time grow under his feet, and a little more than a week after that disastrous meeting had sailed for the Cape. Hampton had readily acquiesced in Grafton's offer, namely, of taking nearly two-thirds of the debt, and allowing the remainder to stand over for some little time ; and it was to the big race on Doncaster Moor that Grafton looked for the recovery, so to speak, of those Ascot losses. The "Wandering Nun" was a strong favourite for that prize, and, as far as Grafton could learn, was not only excessively well, but had undergone a most satisfactory preparation for the struggle on the town moor. The mare, although it was what is called the mares' month, was not a favourite with the general public ; they could not forget her defeat in the Oaks, or understand her miserable

display at Ascot. But amongst the shrewdest men on the turf she was a strong fancy, and there were very few of them who did not back the "Wandering Nun" for the St. Leger. Grafton himself was in this category, and had taken a pretty little bet about the mare at Goodwood.

However, putting his racing cares on one side, Bob Grafton strolled on through Tunnleton until he arrived at the Molecombes' house. Yes, Mrs. Molecombe was at home, and he was shown into the drawing-room, where he found Edith and her mother, and, the first greetings over, at once proceeded to read them Bessie's letter.

"How very terrible for Mrs. Enderby!" said the banker's wife, as Bob Grafton concluded. "If he is a hero, I declare I think she is a heroine. Fancy her—poor thing! she has no sooner cured her husband than she is left alone in the midst of all that bustle and turmoil to take care of herself."

"It is rather rough," said Grafton; "but I don't see how Maurice could help it."

"Of course he couldn't, and, though we all wronged him, and told horrible stories about him here—I was as bad as anybody—he has made us feel mean enough now. As for Bessie, it is hard upon her," said Edith passionately; "but what woman, worth the name of one, would not wish to be within reach of her husband when she knew he was carrying his life in his hand!"

Grafton gazed at the girl with no little admiration as she spoke. "By Jove!" he thought, "how her face lights up when she is moved, she looks quite handsome at this moment." "Yes," he replied, "that's all very well, but it was a mistake Mrs. Enderby's going out. It was no use attempting to persuade her to stay here—go she would; and all one could do was to make things as smooth as possible."

"I don't agree with you, Mr. Grafton; I think it is more than likely she saved her husband's life."

"I grant you that her nursing perhaps contributed a good deal to his recovery, but I have no doubt Maurice wishes now that she was safe in Tunnleton. A man goes campaigning with a lighter heart when he knows those dear to him are safely harboured."

"Had I been in Mrs. Enderby's place, I should have done as Mrs. Enderby has done," replied Edith, defiantly.

"Which by no means follows you would have done what Mr. Enderby wished you," replied Bob, laughing.

"You're too bad, Mr. Grafton, and I'll argue with you no more. How much longer do you remain at Bridge Court?"

"Only a few days, and then I go north to attend the Doncaster Meeting."

"How I envy you!" exclaimed Edith. "How I did enjoy those two days at Ascot, and I am sure you would have too, mamma, if you had only been there."

"Rather too tiring work for me, my dear, I should say from your description of it," rejoined Mrs. Molecombe.

"And what do you think about the Leger, Mr. Grafton?" inquired Edith. "My very limited stock of knowledge concerning racing has almost evaporated since Ascot; but I do know that the Leger is the big race of the Doncaster Meeting."

"Ah! I hope we are not going to have such a terrible time as we had in June. I have trusted our old friend 'The Wandering Nun' with my venture, and expect to see her turn out a very different mare from what she was at Ascot."

"Ah! how nice it would be if the Enderbys were only safe back from the Cape, and we were all going up to Yorkshire to see Bessie's mare win. It makes me sad to think about it," sighed Edith.

"And when Miss Molecombe takes to such wild castle-building as that, I feel it is time for me to go; besides, I have told you all my news."

"But we shall see you again before you leave Bridge Court?" said Edith, as she rose to say good-bye.

"Yes, most likely," replied Grafton. "Certainly, should I hear any more of Maurice, though that is hardly probable." And then Bob took his departure.

He had just reached the garden-gate when he heard his name called two or three times. Turning towards the direction from which the voice came, he saw Miss Molecombe, who had slipped out of one of the drawing-room windows, hurrying to meet him. "Mr. Grafton," she exclaimed, "one word before you go. I really can't help it. You see it's Bessie's mare, and it's only once in a way, you know, and I must have five pounds on it for the Leger. Will you do it for me?"

"Certainly," he replied, laughing. "John Madingley has much to answer for. His 'Wandering Nun' seems to have turned all your heads, and developed the spirit of gambling wherever it was latent. Maurice first, and now you, Miss Molecombe. However, I will do your bidding at once, and do think this time we shall be victorious."

"Thank you so much," replied Edith, and, with a quick little nod of "good-bye," she turned and walked back towards the house.

"She's a rather nice girl that," remarked Grafton to himself, as he trudged homewards, "and I've no doubt old Molecombe can give her a very tidy bit of money if he likes. What an escape she had from that precious scoundrel Dick Madingley, if indeed that be his name." And, singular enough, before he had gone another half-mile that point was destined to be cleared up for him. As he passed the Tunnleton Club General Shrewster was just coming out.

"By Jove, Grafton!" he said, "have you heard the news? There's one of the cleverest turf frauds you ever heard of just come to light. A gang of fellows representing themselves to be betting agents have got hold of a French lady of title, and have swindled

her out of close upon thirty thousand pounds. They've all two or three aliases, and amongst them is one who for some time has passed under the *sobriquet* of Richard Madingley. Go in and buy an evening paper as you pass the station, and you'll see a brief summary of it, but to-morrow morning we shall doubtless read a lengthy account of it."

Grafton followed the general's advice, and saw just enough to whet his curiosity.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE LEGER.

WHEN Grafton opened his paper the next morning it was to read one of those astounding stories which exemplify the boundless credulity of human nature in the pursuit of wealth. A plausible set of adventurers, under the names of Bulow, Crofton & Co., had, by specious and persistent advertising, seduced, doubtless, numberless minnows into their net, but they had at last hooked a big fish, and this latter, in its agonies, promised to prove too much for its captors. Messrs. Bulow, Crofton & Co. continually asserted in the journals that they were in possession of such extensive and valuable information as made winning on the turf an absolute certainty. They advertised more largely in the foreign papers than in the English, and at length attracted the attention of the Comtesse de Mombel, an elderly French lady with a passion for speculation. It did not occur to the Comtesse that, under such circumstances, Messrs. Bulow and Crofton would probably work the gold-mine they had discovered without calling in the general public to help them. She appeared to have blindly trusted these adventurers, of whom she knew nothing, and it was not till she had been actually mulcted of thirty thousand pounds that she blenched, and confided the story of her losses to an old and trusted friend. He, being a man of the world, immediately put himself in communication with the French police; but Messrs. Bulow and Crofton were no 'prentice hands and had for some time anticipated some such result as certain to follow the plucking of the plumpest pigeon they had ever had in their nets. They got wind that the authorities were on their track, and at once transferred themselves across the Channel, where their partners were doing the best they could with the British public. It seemed incredible how the Comtesse could have been duped to the extent she had, how she could have been persuaded to lose sum after sum, but the old lady was a thorough gambler at heart, and knew what it was to fight the bank at Monaco; she was, however, vengeful in her wrath and like a shrieking Mænad, now that her eyes were opened to the way in which she had been defrauded. She had money still left, and did not mind spending some of it to bring those who had robbed her

to justice. She hounded on the French police, and they in their turn roused Scotland Yard. Messrs. Bulow, Crofton & Co. found the pursuit grew hot; they separated and dispersed all over England; but the sleuth-hounds of the law were on their trail; one by one they were apprehended, and were utterly astounded, when brought before the magistrate, to find how exceedingly well their biographies were known at Scotland Yard. They mostly rejoiced in aliases, and amongst them figured French, alias Jackson, alias Madingley, alias Bushman.

"Well," said Grafton to himself, as he threw down the paper, "I have never thought much of Mr. Richard Madingley, as he chose to call himself, looking upon him as one of the outside ring; but I certainly should never have given him credit for being capable of such a gigantic fraud as this. However, the evidence so far goes to show that he was quite one of the minor actors in the drama; but I should think the whole lot are certain to be committed for trial."

That the case excited extraordinary interest in Tunnleton it is needless to say; and to many there it was a source of considerable annoyance. Nobody, perhaps, felt it more than the unfortunate Molecombes, who were conscious of how narrowly they had escaped connection with one of the criminals. How narrowly Edith only knew, and she grew hot with shame to think that her name had ever been coupled with such an one as Dick Madingley.

The papers all remarked on the plausible manners of the prisoners, and pointed out that they seemed to be of superior education. Still Edith felt that, though she really had only been imposed upon like many other people in Tunnleton, yet she could not go about while Richard Madingley's name was upon everybody's lips.

Although Bob Grafton was again in Tunnleton before his departure for the north, he abstained from calling on the Molecombes. He felt that the whole of this exposure must be very annoying to Edith, and that to meet one who, like himself, was so thoroughly conversant with all the ins and outs of Mr. Richard Madingley's career would be only painful. He contented himself with a brief note, in which he informed her that he had obtained twenty pounds to five for her about the "Wandering Nun" for the Leger. It was a point more than the odds, for they had grown very short of late; but man is weak, and, when the commission is given him by a young and good-looking woman, is sure to return a liberal price. Then Bob Grafton started for Yorkshire. He heard lots of South African gossip as he went through London. How Ulundi had been fought, and how Thesiger had promptly washed his hands of the whole business, this victory having been vouchsafed him; how there were many tangled skeins yet to unravel; and how the South African business generally promised to keep our people employed for some time to come.

He went to the War Office to try if he could hear anything of Maurice, but, Enderby being only a volunteer, they could give no accurate information concerning him. Then Grafton bethought himself of the *Heliograph* office, and there they told him that their valued correspondent was quite himself again, and once more on his way to the front.

But all this amounted to little more than Mrs. Enderby's letter had told him, so Grafton, as he had promised, dropped General Shrewster a line to say that he could gather no further tidings of Maurice in London.

When Grafton reached Doncaster he found the Tykes in all the simmer of excitement that the Leger always produces in that somnolent little town. It wakes from its slumbers for but this one week in the year, and then, from the "Salutation" to the Shakespeare siding, the assembled crowd eat, drink, and talk horse both day and night. Bed must be a mockery to many enthusiasts. What with watching the doings at the rooms overnight; what with watching the morning gallops, attending the sale-ring before lunch, and spending the afternoon on the town moor, from the Monday till the big race is over, the votaries of the turf know but little rest.

The Yorkshiremen were all agog about "The Wandering Nun." She was a mare trained in their own county, and they vowed she looked fit to run for her life. She became a hotter favourite every hour. All Yorkshire bets, from the Lord Lieutenant of the county to the porters of the Shakespeare siding, and all Yorkshire was throwing in its lot with John Madingley's mare.

There was a hum of applause as the mare walked down the course preparatory to her preliminary canter, and Grafton, who had seen her in all her races, was fain to admit he had never seen her in such condition before. Her coat shone like satin, and she paced up the course quite cool and collected, looking proudly around as if to challenge any competitor to try conclusions with her to-day, while the winner of the Derby, who was also backed for a large sum, was fretful, uneasy, and lathered freely.

"If ever I saw a winner, that's one!" muttered Grafton. "I think, Miss Molecombe, you and I are going to win our money this time."

"I'll tak' any one's three croons to two the mare wins," shouted a burly farmer within a few yards of him.

As for the story of the race it is soon told. Never was a Leger galloped in which there were fewer vicissitudes—it might be said, none. "The Wandering Nun" got well off, lay over her field the whole way to the Red House turn, when she came away, and, despite a resolute challenge by the Derby winner half-way up the straight, won easily by a couple of lengths.

"It's come off handsomely this time," muttered Bob. "This will square up Maurice; it's bonnets for Miss Molecombe, or she can go for a sealskin if she likes it better; and for myself, well,

I shall enjoy the luxury of betting the ring their own money back at Newmarket."

He strolled into Tattersall's ring in the course of the afternoon, when he fell across Hampton.

"Well, Mr. Grafton," exclaimed the bookmaker, with a beaming face, "you've had a good race of it no doubt."

"Very fair in my little way," replied Bob, "and you?"

"A rare good 'un, sir," replied the bookmaker; "I was sure the summer form was all wrong, and I took all the long shots about 'The Wandering Nun' I could lay my hands on after she was beat at Ascot, and covered my money by laying it back at the short odds they have been taking this week. Any horse of Mr. Madingley's, you see, sir, one knew would be run straight, and that mare when she's right is the best of her year, and she was about as fit to-day as ever I saw one."

"Yes," replied Grafton, "and another good winner on the race you'll be glad to hear of is Mr. Enderby; he is away in South Africa, as no doubt you know, but I've no doubt in the course of the next week or two I shall be able to hand you over the balance of his account."

"Don't talk of that, sir," replied the jubilant bookmaker. "When I read that account in the papers of his ride through all them Kafir fellows I'd have wiped the slate with pleasure. Do me a favour, Mr. Grafton. Just come right away now, and drink his health coupled with 'The Wandering Nun's' in a glass of champagne."

And that afternoon, though he may be destined perhaps never to know it, Maurice Enderby's health was enthusiastically drunk in the Grand Stand at Doncaster.

It was from General Shrewster Edith first learnt of John Madingley's victory. He had not known much of Miss Molecombe previously, but had become interested in her from the enthusiastic friendship she had developed of late for the Enderbys. Edith had gradually wormed out of Bessie before she left how much she had owed to Maurice's interference, and the girl's gratitude was unbounded. Shrewster had taken a great fancy to her; and, like all men who are choice in their friendships, was all the more prized by those whom they took the trouble to cultivate, and where he pleased there were few men could make themselves more agreeable than could the general. A well-read man, who had lived much of his life in the great London world, of which he had never altogether lost touch, he had plenty to say about pretty well everything and everybody, and Edith Molecombe never tired of sitting at the feet of Gamaliel.

The general was very pleased when the result of the race became known in Tunnleton. He liked to hear of his old friend winning, and chuckled as he thought of what a stake he would have won over it himself in the old days when he used to bet so

heavily. He had given up all that sort of thing now and was never seen upon a race-course, but he still took the greatest interest in the fortunes of his personal friends who still continued their favourite pastime. Meeting Miss Molecombe that afternoon, he told her the news triumphantly, and was astonished at that young lady's clapping her hands and exclaiming—

"I knew she would; I felt she would. Mr. Grafton said 'The Wandering Nun' was sure to win."

"Well," replied the general, laughing, "I think Mr. Grafton is too old a hand to express himself quite so positively, but I suppose you won a lot of money?"

"I won twenty pounds, general," replied Edith; "Mr. Grafton made my bet for me."

"And this after your Ascot experiences? Mark me," continued the general, with mock solemnity, "the turf will be your ruin!"

"Not this time, anyway," rejoined the young lady, as she nodded a merry good-bye and then tripped lightly on her way.

"Ha, principal turf adviser to a young lady! A very comfortable appointment. There's only one thing, Master Bob: remember that racing often leads to match-making, and, by Jove, if it does in your case I shall say you've not done badly on the turf," and, with a smile at his own joke, the general strolled homewards.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE BIVOUAC.

ON the borderland abutting the Transvaal and the Zulu country are bivouaked a large force concentrated with the immediate view to the suppression of Sikukuni; clearly time, thinks Sir Garnet, that that defiant and audacious marauder should be brought to his marrow-bones. While Cetewayo claimed all our attention this chieftain had had things a good deal his own way; he had thrashed the Boers, when they had gone out against him, and, though we had once worked our way within a mile of his citadel, sickness, drought, and want of provisions had compelled us to fall back, and the enterprising Sikukuni had made that retreat very bitter to us, hanging on the trail of his invaders with the pertinacity of a bull-dog, and making them feel for many a mile on their way back that they had stirred up a hornet's nest. But if settlement with Sikukuni had been postponed the British authorities had by no means forgotten his offending, a pretty accurate record had been kept of his raiding and plundering, and now the time had come to close accounts with him.

Lounging round the bivouac fire, wrapped in all the dreamy enjoyment of the evening pipe, were three men lazily discussing the prospects of the next two or three days.

"Do you think he'll make a stand?" asked Maurice Enderby. "These fellows can fight, we all know, but Sikukuni must have heard all about the battle of Ulundi by this time, and knows that Cetewayo is a prisoner and the Zulu army a thing of the past."

"You needn't fret yourself on that point," replied a stout, thick-set little officer of the Natal contingent. "I've been up here before, and I'll tell you his citadel is a pretty hard nut to crack. We had a good look at it last time, though we had to retreat without attempting it, but he hung on our skirts for many a mile as we fell back, and made things pretty lively for us. In fact it was a case of desultory fighting for some days. We shall have it of course this time; we've plenty of force and Sir Garnet means it, but it'll be a hottish fight, you may take your oath."

A tramp of horses' hoofs and the jingle of a sabre caused all three men to raise themselves on their elbows, and then a dragoon jogged quietly into the fire-light, reined up his horse, and exclaimed in easy nonchalant tones—

"Don't let me disturb you, gentlemen, but perhaps you can tell me where Mr. Enderby, on General W.'s staff, is spending his evening?"

"Charles Grafton!" exclaimed Maurice, as he sprang to his feet, and rushed eagerly forward to shake hands with the new-comer. "What, have all your people got up?"

"Yes, old man, we've pushed along pretty sharp to join you. Our colonel had no idea of a row coming off without our being near it. And, when you've driven the beggars out of their earths, we shall give a very tidy account of them in the open, you'll see. Bless you, you can't think what a lot of 'em us Lancers poked out of the grass after Ulundi."

"Well, we shall be very glad of your help, but you must be dead tired; jump off and we'll do the best we can for you and your horse."

"Can't," replied young Grafton briefly; "I must go back to my own people, who are about half-a-mile away. I only rode on to bring you this letter and a couple of newspapers from Bob, but if you've got anything handy to drink I shall be very glad to wash my mouth out," and, as he spoke, the lancer drew the papers from his sabretasche and handed them to Maurice. "Here's good news for you," he continued, "in Bob's letter, for 'The Wandering Nun' won the Leger, and the papers are full of a wonderful trial which he says will interest you. Thanks," he added, as he took the tumbler Maurice proffered him; "and now I'm off. I shall sleep without rocking as soon as we get littered down; we've been in the saddle a good many hours to-day. Good-night, gentlemen," and, turning his horse, the lancer disappeared in the gloaming.

Having satisfied his companions' curiosity as to who the new-comer was, and explained that his appearance was the announcement that the —th Lancers had joined the camp, Maurice pro-

ceeded to open his letter. This contained an account of the Leger, which Bob described with all the gusto of an enthusiast.

"It will enable you," continued the writer, "to square up comfortably with Hampton. I saw him at Doncaster and told him as much, and he insisted on our having a bottle of champagne to drink your health in, and vowed that, after reading the account of your famous ride from Etshowe, he would willingly cry quits over the whole affair. It was a hot afternoon, Maurice; he had had a good race and 'wetted' it, in fact he had attained to the acme of geniality. As for your ride, sir, you can't think how it has been talked of. The usual version is, that you charged straight through the whole Zulu army, and people wrangle tremendously about the number that you sabred with your own hand; I only know that Shaw the Life Guardsman sinks into utter insignificance when his holocaust is compared with yours. As for Tunnleton it has adopted you; it claims you as a son; I am not sure there were not thoughts of canonizing you; but you really may expect the freedom of the town in a gold box when you return; as for the Reverend Mr. Jarrow, he smiles sweetly and says he made you, and on investigation I found it was not in your military capacity but in your literary one, for that you are war correspondent for the *Heliograph* has leaked out, and your spirited letters have taken us all much by surprise. Go on, my boy, and prosper. Bear in mind, my dear Maurice, that you have a wife, and therefore I don't think, in justice to her, you ought to fight the Zulu army again single-handed. Excuse all my rubbish. Good-bye and God bless you. We shall all be delighted to take you by the hand again—the sooner the better.

"Ever yours,

"BOB GRAFTON.

"Kindest regards to Mrs. Enderby.

"By the way, I send you a couple of papers that I think will interest you. They contain a conclusion of the Richard Madingley romance."

"Ah! they must wait for the morning," muttered Maurice. "I am very glad that I am now able to settle all my liabilities. The sequel of that scamp Madingley's iniquities I am certainly curious to learn. To think what a fool I allowed him to make of me at Ascot. However, a good sleep is the thing one wants now," and with that Maurice rolled himself in his cloak, and followed the example of his comrades.

The camp was astir betimes the next morning. Every one knew that they were within easy reach of Sikukuni's citadel, and that they would attack that place as soon as they reached it.

Maurice, who found himself an idle man for the present, sat quietly down to read his papers. It was with astonishment that he perused the account of the great De Mombel fraud, as the trial

was headed. The extraordinary credulity displayed by the Comtesse made him think less harshly of his own weakness. There is much consolation in finding that we have fellows in our folly.

The police had tracked out the antecedents of all the prisoners, and they were, without exception, men of good education, and, in the case of two of them, certainly endowed with talents that should have guaranteed them success in any honest calling. But, naturally, the biography that interested Maurice most was that of the *soi-disant* Richard Madingley.

He was the son of a well-to-do auctioneer in a country town about four miles from Bingwell, and consequently from a boy had known the whole history of John Madingley. As he grew up, his father associated him with himself in the business, but Dick had already taken to horse-racing and dissolute courses. High words passed between father and son in consequence of the way in which the latter neglected his duties. His inattention, in fact, was seriously affecting the business, and the father soon found that it was hopeless to leave anything to Dick. A violent quarrel ensued between them at last.

The young man was attending a neighbouring race-meeting when he ought to have been "knocking down lots" in the big room of the George Hotel. The father, a stern, violent man, in his wrath told Dick that he might get his living how and where he pleased, but that he would maintain him no longer in idleness. Dick had a bit of his father's wayward temper, and left Beckington the next day, and wishing to sever all connection with that place—for which he had good and sufficient reasons of his own—determined to change his name. While he was about it he resolved to do it handsomely, and it occurred to him that he could not do better than assume the name of Madingley. It was, the young man thought, a good travelling title. He knew that John Madingley rarely set foot upon a race-course, and that if he passed himself off as a distant relation of his he was not likely to meet with exposure.

The police had traced Dick French's career with marvellous accuracy. They had followed him through various situations, in all of which he would have done well could he have made up his mind to stick to his work; but, just as he had lost the capital berth of superintendent of the Bristol restaurant, from perpetually requesting leave to absent himself from his duties, so had been the case in all his other employments. There had never been anything against him, and it was not till he had left the "Bristol" that he had avowedly taken to the turf, though that had been the chief cause in reality of his so constantly absenting himself from his employment.

But Maurice had no time to read more, for the cavalry trumpets were sounding "boot and saddle," and the "assembly" was ringing through the infantry camp. The hive was all astir, and about

to move forward on most malevolent intentions, bent upon stinging to death Sikukuni and all his horde.

Maurice called for his horse, and had just mounted, when Charlie Grafton cantered up.

"The game's about to begin," he cried, "and what a morning we've got for it. We're off at once, to cover your advance. Our vedettes report that they touched the enemy's outposts all night. He's all there, and means business. What did you think of the trial? It killed a dull day or two for us, I can tell you, on our way down, and Bob says that you and he know something of this French."

"Yes," rejoined Maurice, "we know a good deal about him, which I'll tell you when we've time. It's too long a story to enter upon just now."

"Yes," laughed the other; "we have no time for yarning just now; I only cantered over just to look at you by daylight before we started—the work will be warm from all I hear."

"I fancy so," replied Maurice; and the two rode away in opposite directions.

It was a pretty sight—the advance that clear autumn morning—the cavalry scouring those big rolling plains far in advance, diverging here and there on either flank to make good bits of bush, or to peer round the kopjes which occasionally cropped up. The enemy's skirmishers could be seen falling back and firing before the steady advance of our own people. At last they reach the mouth of the defile, which led immediately to Sikukuni's stronghold, and now the cavalry were promptly called in. In that broken ground which had now to be traversed, commanded by those quaint masses of rock and boulders, called in the language of the country kopjes, there was no opportunity for the horsemen, and the infantry skirmishers now spread out in a cloud in their stead. They were no sooner well into the defile than that the enemy meant a stubborn resistance became a fact past all doubt. Every one of these singular hills, running many of them to some hundred feet in height, were crowned with the enemy, who kept up a sharp fire on the advancing column, and only yielded their position upon being fairly turned out by our skirmishers.

Steadily and persistently the force wound its way through the defile, but the advance was slower than had been anticipated. The enemy's fixed determination was beyond all praise. Not only did they fight every kopje, but they disputed every boulder. Science, and even perhaps numbers, were against them; but on the other hand the country gave them great natural advantages for defence, and they availed themselves of them as dexterously as if led by a skilled European. Stubbornly they resisted, unflinchingly they fought, for every quarter of a mile of that defile; but the Anglo-Saxon won his way at last, and emerged within sight of Sikukuni's citadel. Anxiously the military chiefs bent their field-

glasses on this famous stronghold, and there could be no doubt that, should the resistance be as stubborn as that through the pass which they had just fought their way through, they had a tolerably stiff job before them.

Something like a mile of open plain now intervened between them and the place they had come to capture, dotted by the skirmishers, already half a mile ahead, and now the guns, which had done good service in forcing the passage, emerged from the defile, and galloped sharply to the front, unlimbered, and began to shell the fortress. It consisted of a rocky hill some seven or eight hundred feet high, honeycombed with caves, and artificially terraced all the way up. At the base of the mountain lay the kraal or town, consisting of numberless groups of wattled screen huts, surmounted in many instances by palisading and stone walls. From behind each group of huts a direct or enfilade fire could be poured on the attacking party, while the huts themselves were thoroughly commanded by the rocks above. The whole town was encompassed by an impenetrable hedge of prickly pear, the single entrance to which was barricaded with timber, and led through a mixed avenue of prickly pear and cactus. A very ugly place indeed to get into for an enemy without artillery, but that certainly considerably curtailed its natural defences, for it was quite possible to shell the defenders out of their kraal before delivering the attack. Nevertheless, the caves, the bush-clothed crags, and the rocky terraces, gave promises of furnishing a toughish job to the invader.

"Well, Mr. Enderby," said the general, after a steady look at it, "I mean having it and Sikukuni himself to boot; but it will cost us dear if these fellows fight, as we've every reason to suppose they will. Just ride forward, tell Colonel Rumford he is making capital practice, and that I want that kraal cleared before I slip the infantry. I wish to goodness I knew whether those fellows can retreat down the back of their mountain, but I suppose there is no doubt they can."

Maurice set spurs to his horse, and cantered gaily off to where Colonel Rumford's guns, with perfect accuracy, were dropping shell after shell into the town; but as he remarked upon receiving the general's message:

"Tell the chief, sir, I'm not producing so much effect as I expected. The town is evidently occupied by nothing but their warriors, and even they, I can't help fancying, don't hold it in any force. My men have got the range exactly, and, though I've already knocked down some half-score of their huts, yet the result has been the disturbance of very few of them. Now and again a shell makes a few of them shift their quarters, but I can't think there are many of them there."

"I will tell the general what you say, sir," replied Maurice, as he touched his cap, and, turning his horse sharply round, he galloped back to his chief.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE STORMING OF THE KRAAL.

BEFORE Maurice had regained the general's staff the infantry were advancing steadily across the plain towards the kraal. Sikukuni's people made no sign, that is, in the town that lay at the foot of the mountain; still, it was evidently not deserted, for, as Colonel Rumford had said, his shells every now and then unearthed a few of them, and sent them scampering elsewhere for shelter; but on the rocky terraces above the enemy showed themselves freely, and were evidently prepared for resistance. Steadily the troops advanced, the guns playing over their heads, but without much apparent effect, although shell after shell was pitched into the kraal, upon which all eyes were riveted. The attacking party had now got within some couple of hundred yards, when suddenly the quick eye of the officer who was leading the stormers caught the gleam of steel from behind that hedge of prickly pear.

"Lie down!" he thundered; and the bugler at his side sounded the order—sounding, poor lad, his own *requiem* as he did so—for as the storming party dropped in obedience to his command a volley of musketry swept over them, which, however, claimed but one victim as its result.

"Axes to the front!" cried their leader; "now then, my lads, up and at them before they have time to load again. Hold your fire till you are up to the hedge. Forward! Charge!" and waving his sword he dashed forward at a steady run.

The Kafirs had by no means abandoned the town, but were formed up behind the hedge, which now became the scene of a desperate hand-to-hand struggle. Several of the men had been armed with axes, with a view to hewing their way through the barrier, and succeeded in making a gap which they soon enlarged sufficiently to enable the greater part of their companies to force their way through.

Still, inside, the garrison made a most stubborn resistance, but the supports were promptly hurried up, and after a quarter of an hour's fierce fighting the kraal was in the hands of the English; the enemy retreating up the mountain. The battle had now begun in earnest; large gaps were speedily opened through the pear and cactus hedge. The infantry were poured rapidly into the place, only to find themselves under a heavy fire from the terraces immediately above them. No time was lost, and speedily the victors were swarming up the mountain in pursuit of their obstinate foe. When they gained the first terrace, which they did with considerable loss, it was only to encounter as obstinate a resistance as they had done down below; and it was clear that

the storming of these successive terraces, enfiladed as they were in many instances by caves, the whereabouts of which were unknown to the assailants, was a very tough business. The general's aides rode fast and far that day, for he rapidly recognized the exceptional strength of the position, and foresaw, if he meant to make, to use a homely phrase, "a good job of it," it would be necessary to employ all his infantry.

Slowly, but steadily, the British won their way up the mountain, though every terrace was desperately contested. The sun was now high in the heavens, and the troops had been, more or less, engaged since early morning, but the general saw now that it was a question of a short time only. The defence began to wax somewhat weaker. You cannot drive a foe before you for hours without more or less demoralizing him, and the last terrace taken had not been defended to the bitter end as the previous ones had been.

"Mr. Enderby," exclaimed the general, "ride down to Major Carlton and tell him to take his lancers round the mountain so as to cut off the enemy if he endeavours to escape on the other side, and then make your way up yonder," and he pointed to the mountain, "and bring me back word what they think of things in front. It looks to me as if we had pretty well taken the fight out of them."

Maurice rode off with his orders. "The general's right," he muttered, "the heart is about taken out of them now, and if the lancers are to cut off their retreat they'll have to look sharp."

He gave his message to Major Carlton, and then lingered to exchange a few words with Charlie Grafton.

"So you've brought us our orders to chip in again, we've had nothing to do but look on lately."

"No, the infantry have had toughish work driving those fellows up the mountain, and the general wants you fellows to catch them when they come down the other side; and now I'm off; my orders are to go and see how they are getting on up there."

"And we're off too," replied Charlie. "I think we shall have made a pretty clean business of it before another couple of hours are over, if we only find galloping ground when we get round by the hill."

Maurice nodded good-bye, and then pushed rapidly on to the kraal. He entered through one of the gaps that had been hewn in the prickly thorn hedge, dismounted, and giving his horse in charge to some of the ambulance people, who were busy amongst the huts, commenced the ascent of the mountain. The spattering rifle fire was going on above him as the skirmishers pushed forward from rock to rock, preparatory to storming the last terrace but one. Ere Maurice could reach them he heard the cheer which told that they had closed in, and heralded the final rush; he pushed on as rapidly as he could, but they were a good bit above him, and though he gained rapidly upon them the yells and shouts told him

they were already at close quarters, and he knew that the struggle would be most likely over before he got up. It turned out as he expected, and when he arrived the assailants were in full possession of the terrace, and pausing for a few minutes previous to attacking the last one.

"What, it's you in command, Maitland!" he exclaimed, as he exchanged hand-grips with the sturdy Highlander who was in command of the party.

"Yes," he answered, glancing down at the crimsoned blade of his claymore, "these fellows have fought like wild cats, and it has cost us dear. But it is about over now, we've only that one more terrace to carry and they don't mean making much of a stand there; see, there's lots of them going over the crest of the hill now. Now, my lads, spread out in skirmishing order, and push on as before. Sound the advance, bugler;" and again the Highlanders pushed on, using their rifles but little this time, and being met by only a spattering desultory fire from the final terrace. The short space of ground was quickly skirmished over; the bugle sounded the close, and Maitland with a cheer led his men in their rush. The fighting on this terrace was all over in two or three minutes; a handful of the Kafirs perished grimly in their obstinacy sooner than yield to the invader; and it was now obvious that the whole of Sikukuni's stronghold was in the hands of the English, his tribes scattered and dispersed over the crest of the hill.

"A very pretty eye this same Sikukuni had for a military position," said Maitland. "It's been a rare tough nut to crack, and, if the artillery had not dispersed them a good deal in the kraal, it would have cost us still more lives than it has."

"Yes," replied Maurice, as he stepped along the terrace; unluckily, a cave to his right attracted his attention and he advanced a few steps towards it. Suddenly four or five rifles were discharged from its interior, and with a stifled cry Maurice fell to the ground.

There was a rush of soldiers to the cave; a tumult mixed with shrill cries and savage execrations, and then all was still; and in another couple of minutes half-a-dozen grim veterans issued from its mouth and quietly wiped their blood-stained bayonets. Maitland had sprung forward in the meanwhile and raised Maurice. The wounded man was deadly pale, and a slight froth was oozing from his lips.

"He's badly hit, sir, I'm thinking," said a bluff corporal to his officer, as he assisted him to place Maurice in what they deemed an easy position.

"Yes," rejoined Maitland; "away with you, Donald, and hurry up the doctor as quickly as you can. We must get him down this confounded place as soon as we can, but the surgeon had better see him first."

The corporal dashed down to the terrace below him, where he soon

found the surgeon busy in the exercise of his duties. The doctor responded promptly to the summons; quick as thought he was on his knees and tearing open the patrol jacket, cut away the shirt, and gazed anxiously into the two small wounds from which the blood was slowly oozing.

"That's nothing," he said, pointing to the upper one; "but there's trouble in this! of what nature it is difficult to say, till I've used the probe; but it must have hit some of the vital organs. We must get him down of course, but if you're a friend of his, Maitland, it's no use disguising from you that it's a bad case."

"I've not known him very long," replied the other, "but he's a right good fellow. It's Enderby, the man who did the famous ride from Etshowe, you know. I can't stay any longer, for I must scour the crest of the hill with my skirmishers. He is not in immediate danger, is he?"

"No," replied the doctor; "he is recovering now from the first shock, and curiously enough it's more that upper wound than the lower which has stretched him senseless. He'll soon come to when I administer him a stimulant."

Maitland had time for no more. "Forward, my lads," he exclaimed, and very soon he and his Highlanders had crowned the crest of the hill from whence they could descry their broken foe, retreating pell-mell down the narrow and precipitate road that led to the plain on the other side. A stretcher party meanwhile bore Maurice down to the kraal. A temporary hospital was established there, and, after a table-spoonful or so of brandy had been forced down his throat, he opened his eyes, and began slowly to recover his senses.

"Don't talk—don't try to talk. You are badly hit, but we've given these Kafirs an awful dusting. What I want you to do is to lie as still as you can. Anything you want just whisper to me as shortly as you possibly can."

Maurice nodded assent, and then, in tones barely above a whisper, murmured—

"Charlie Grafton."

"I know," replied the surgeon. "He's in the —th Lancers. He shall be sent for at once, and no doubt will turn up as soon as he can."

"Done, doctor, eh?" whispered Maurice, interrogatively.

"Pooh! Mr. Enderby," rejoined the surgeon. "Knocked out of time for the present, but we shall patch you up, and you'll live to drink many a bumper in commemoration of this day's victory. Now swallow this. I want you to sleep and keep as quiet as you can till we get you to the waggons."

"All right, doctor!" murmured Maurice, with a faint smile. "I'll do my best, but my time has come. Poor Bessie!" and, having swallowed the potion the doctor proffered, he fell quietly back on the stretcher, and seemed to sleep.

Far away in the open plains at the back of the mountain the lancers rode hot and fiercely on the track of the flying enemy, but their defeat was thorough, and the demoralized Kafirs made not the slightest attempt to stand; whether the famous robber chieftain had fallen or not in the day's battle, Major Carlton knew not, when he recalled his squadrons, their lances red with carnage. That Sikukuni was not his prisoner was all he could say positively on that point. Slowly the wearied lancers jogged back towards the camp, which was already formed in the plain fronting the mountain which had been the object of such fierce contention during the day, and they had hardly arrived there before a messenger from the general made his appearance, with an intimation that he wished a report sent to him at once of what they had done on the other side of the hill. The messenger further brought a note for Lieutenant Grafton, which briefly informed him that Maurice Enderby was badly wounded and anxious to see him, "so badly," added the writer, "that there is not very much time to be lost."

Charlie was much distressed at the intelligence, and went at once to his commanding officer, for leave to ride across to headquarters, as soon as they had got the men camped down for the night.

"All right, Grafton," replied the major, "I've got to send one of you with this report of our day's doings to the general. He will probably ask you a few questions about what we did. Poor Enderby! I hope you will not find him quite so bad as you expect. Most promising young fellow that, and I should like to have had him one of us."

Grafton touched his cap and without further word started on his errand. He had not seen much of Maurice, it was true, but there are circumstances under which a strong friendship springs up in a few hours such as might take months in the ordinary course of things. The light-hearted dragoon had taken a strange fancy to Maurice from the first, and it must be remembered that he had heard a great deal of Enderby from his brother, and then there was no manner of doubt that Maurice's sabre had saved his life on the occasion of the night attack outside Etshowe.

"There can be no hope," he thought; "poor fellow! he must have got his death wound I suppose—the doctor would hardly have said 'no time to be lost' unless it had been pretty well all over." He made his way in the first place to the general's tent and gave his report.

"I had some hopes, Mr. Grafton, you might have brought me word that you had captured Sikukuni himself; the prisoners say he was commanding in person, but I am afraid now he has escaped us. However, I am glad to hear that the casualties in your corps are slight," and a nod of farewell told Grafton that he was dismissed, and now he was free to go and see Enderby. He soon found the

tent to which he had been carried. One of his brother aides-de-camp was watching by the bedside and rose as Charlie entered.

"Mr. Grafton, I presume. I am very glad you have come, for he is very anxious to see you."

"Is it so very bad a business?" asked the lancer in a low tone, though not so low but what it caught the quick ears of the wounded man.

"Come here; Charlie," he said, "yes, I am going surely if slowly. The doctor owned as much when he was here some half-hour ago, and I can feel myself that it is so. I am not afraid to die, but when I think of my wife and child I am not sure that I had any business out here at all. Poor Bessie! she has come so far, and even now will be denied the satisfaction of receiving my farewell kiss. I don't know. I got a false start somehow to begin with, and then I began to go wrong, and was afraid to trust myself amidst all the racing. The work out here kept me straight, you see."

"Yes," interrupted Grafton, as he clasped the dying man's hand, "we all know how well you've done your work too, and are proud of you."

A smile came over Maurice's face at the praise of his young comrade, and he whispered—

"Give me some more of that stuff to drink. I have one favour to ask of you; I know it's granted already if within your power."

"You're letting him talk too much," said the quiet voice of the doctor, who had glided noiselessly to the bedside.

"It makes very little difference, doctor," rejoined Maurice; "a few hours more of life are of little consequence. I am ready to go, as it must be so, as soon as I have said what I want to Grafton. Listen, Charlie: I should think our work here was finished up to-day, and that fighting, at all events, is over for the present. I want you to go down to Marietzburg and take my last message to my wife. Tell her how I died, and that my last thought was of her. I made a will before I left England, and your brother is my executor and knows all about everything. If you can get leave you will do this for me, won't you, and see poor Bessie off to England as well? If I struck a good blow for you that night by Etshowe you'll not fail me now."

"I promise you solemnly to do your bidding, Maurice," replied Charlie, as he pressed the dying man's hand.

"Good-bye! Good-bye, doctor! I am choking! It was all a false start!" Then came a paroxysm of coughing, the blood gushed from his lips, one or two convulsive shivers of the strong frame, and Maurice Enderby's course was run.

"He was shot through the lungs," said the doctor, as he reverently closed the eyes, "and the internal hemorrhage has choked and killed him."

CONCLUSION.

THEY laid poor Maurice to rest, with many of his gallant comrades, at the foot of that rocky stronghold which had been the scene of such desperate fighting. Maitland, Charlie Grafton, the surgeon, and some half-dozen others heard the last few prayers read over him, and then they left him to his last sleep in the wild, far-away land to which his fate had driven him.

As the dead man had foreseen, this victory finished up the war in that part of Zululand, and Charlie found but little difficulty in obtaining a month's leave, and then, with a sorrowful heart, he started on his journey to Marietzburg.

"Poor Maurice!" he muttered; "I am bound to do his bidding, but pegging one's way up that hill the other day would have been child's play compared to this. How I am to tell the poor little soul that she'll never see her husband again I'm sure I don't know. It's pretty bad when one has to break trouble to a pal, but it is nothing to this!"

As far as the lancer's experience on this point went, the breaking to one of his brother-officers that he had smashed the pipe or lamed the horse he had borrowed was about as much as he could speak to; but ill news travels apace, and, some days before Charlie Grafton saw her, Bessie had heard of the capture of Sikukuni's stronghold and knew of the price it had cost her. She was stunned by the blow in the first place, but it is astonishing how these soft, pliable women steel themselves to bear trouble when it comes, and, the first shock over, Bessie looked her great trouble steadily in the face. There was no more for her to do in this country; she was alone in the world once more; no, not quite; there was her child, and she must get back to it as quickly as might be. She had no idea how she was left with regard to worldly goods; she knew that Maurice had done the best he could for her before he left England, and that Mr. Grafton knew all about it. She would wait a little longer on the miserable chance that the news of Maurice's death might not be true; but she had little hope; she knew how rarely it was that these sinister rumours were contradicted; a supplementary return of killed and wounded was far more common than a slight error with regard to the original list; still, she was there, and whilst a glimmer of hope was left she was bound to wait. It was too hard! She had come so far. She had nursed him back to life once, and yet she was destined to be far away from him when he died, not fated to have the sad satisfaction of hearing his farewell and receiving his last kiss. She was seated at the window looking out over those rolling plains across which, but a few weeks back, she had cantered so blithely with Maurice. She was musing over her short married life and

thinking, how, despite its troubles, what a happy time it had been to her. The tears welled to her eyes as she thought sadly of her present desolation, when the door suddenly opened and a servant announced, "Mr. Grafton."

She had never as yet seen Charlie, but of course had heard much of him from her husband, and rose at once to welcome him. She knew his errand, and he saw, both in her face and by her dress, that she did so. It was an immense relief to him and gave him courage to plunge *in medias res* at once.

"You know why I am here, Mrs. Enderby? The terrible tidings have reached you, I can see, though I have ridden both fast and far to break them to you myself."

"Thank you," she replied gently, as she sank back in her chair.

"I was with him to the last," continued Charlie, "and have brought you his last farewell, as I promised I would. 'Bid my wife good-bye for me,' he said, 'and tell her my last thought was of her.'"

Bessie's tears flowed fast, and there was a strange huskiness in Grafton's voice as he went on—

"I stood by his grave, Mrs. Enderby, and saw the dust fall on the staunchest friend I ever had—one who all but gave his life for mine. It was hard; the day was over, the battle won, when poor Maurice, who was in the front as usual, came across four or five Kafirs skulking in a cave. Whether they were scared at finding themselves discovered or what, I don't know; but they all discharged their guns and killed poor Maurice. It may be some slight consolation to you to know that everything was done for him that could be done, and that he was spared much suffering." And here Charlie ceased speaking, and Bessie's sobs alone broke the silence of the apartment.

"Thank you, very much, Mr. Grafton," she said, as soon as she could control her voice. "Leave me by myself, please, for a little, to think it all over. I didn't know till now how fondly I still clung to the hope that he might still be alive. I shall see you again, of course?"

"Yes, I shall be quite at your disposal for the next few days," and so saying, Charlie left the room.

After the first few hours Bessie once more recovered herself, and set herself at once to work to make preparations for her departure. She was delayed for some two or three days, in consequence of the necessary arrangements for quitting Marietzburg requiring some little management, and during that time she never tired of hearing Charlie Grafton talk about her lost husband. She heard the story of the ride from Etshowe from a man who had all but witnessed it himself, and Charlie never wearied of descanting on the good qualities of the dead man.

"He could ride, Mrs. Enderby, and there wasn't a better swordsman in the cavalry brigade."

However, thanks to the lancer's exertions, they were off for Port Durhan at last, where, true to his promise, Charlie had determined to see Mrs. Enderby safe on board ship, and she was naturally only too anxious to leave a land in which she had known such bitter sorrow.

The "Kangaroo's" anchor was atrip, the blue peter was flying at the fore, and the hoarse cry of "for shore to the gangway" resounded through her decks.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Enderby," exclaimed Charlie Grafton. "May fair winds and a good voyage be your lot. I have kept it till to-day," he continued, as he placed a small packet in her hand, "but I brought down for you Maurice's watch, rings, and a few trifles of that sort; in fact we kept all we thought you would like to have. His sword, and a few of the larger things, have been forwarded to my brother; and now I must say good-bye. Remember me to Bob."

"Good-bye, Mr. Grafton; and thank you very much for all the care you have taken of me."

"I have only done the very little I could to pay off the great debt I owed your husband," said Charlie, as he pressed her hand.

"Now then, look alive for shore," roared a hoarse voice behind them, "we shall be moving through the water in another five minutes." Charlie lifted his cap and in another minute was slipping down the gangway into one of the surf-boats that lay alongside. A few minutes more, and a flutter of her handkerchief from Bessie as the steamer sped on her homeward voyage, and a wave of his cap from young Grafton as the rowers ploughed steadily back to the Natal coast, and their adieux were completed.

* * * * *

"Well, general, I've done it," exclaimed Bob Grafton, with an expression of comic despair, as he burst suddenly into the general's sanctuary, regardless of the efforts of the well-trained servitor, who vainly endeavoured to announce him. "I don't want to say a word against poor dear Maurice Enderby, but this is just what comes of ill-regulated young men who go off to the wars, and leave what the Americans would call 'loose children' lying around."

"What on earth do you mean?" said General Shrewster, as in blank astonishment he removed the cigar from his lips.

"Just this," returned Grafton: "when Mrs. Enderby went off all in a hurry to look after her husband, Mrs. Molecombe volunteered to take care of the child till she came back. Well, you know what a woman is, under those circumstances. She swore-in all her friends to keep an eye on that boy. There was a perfect syndicate of us in the business, and the end of it is——"

"That two of that syndicate have settled to become one," interposed the general, laughing. "My dear Grafton, I heartily congratulate you. I've seen a good deal of Edith Molecombe lately,

and she is a monstrous nice, sensible, ladylike girl, and in a worldly point of view, is a very fair match for any man."

"Oh! it's all right," replied Bob; "don't think I've any misgivings about the matter. The only blessed thing I don't quite understand is, how I came to do it all; you see I never counted upon 'plunging' in that way."

"I dare say not. I fancy there are a good many fellows who don't make up their minds till quite the last moment. A hot flirtation is like a good thing to hounds. You take fences you would not look at it in cold blood. However, I've nothing but congratulations for you. Have you any news of Mrs. Enderby?"

"Yes; I had a letter from Charlie only the other day, and she may be here any moment. He saw her off from Port Durban and it's a mere question whether the "Kangaroo" or the mail steamer goes the fastest."

"She'll be made a great fuss with here," said Shrewster quietly, "when she does arrive. The feeling about poor Enderby is very strong. Tunnleton is very proud of his exploits in Zululand, and there is an idea that he was dealt rather hardly with about his Tunnleton doings. Poor fellow! I'm afraid my advice had something to say to sending him out to his doom."

"That's nonsense, general," replied Grafton; "as far as that goes, I had also something to say to it. But what was to be done? The man had made a false start in life. He was always fretting in his clerical harness, and the gossip here stung him to madness. Had he been spared, poor fellow, he would have made his mark in his new profession. Charlie's letter is full of his praises, and I fancy the men out there thought very highly of him, and that, had he lived, there would have been very little doubt about his obtaining the commission he desired."

"And when does your brother think of coming home?" asked the general.

"When this cruel war is over, as the song says," laughed Bob. "I've a sort of hazy idea that it never *is* quite over in those parts. They are always on the simmer, like a *pot au feu*, and boil over at periodical intervals."

As General Shrewster had predicted, Bessie's friends showed strong sympathy for her in her trouble, and the Molecombes insisted upon her making her home with them till, as Edith said, "she had time to look round," and Bessie willingly consented.

"I have," she said, smiling, "some business matters to talk over with Mr. Grafton, and I should think there is no place where I am more likely to come across him than here."

"Perhaps not," rejoined Edith demurely, "he *is* here a good deal."

"Besides," continued Bessie, "I shall most probably settle in Tunnleton. I have a great many friends here, and I think can manage with my slender income."

But a letter from John Madingley very soon removed any fears Mrs. Enderby might entertain regarding ways and means, for Uncle John, who had read of Maurice's exploits with the greatest pride, and who had felt most sincerely grieved at his untimely end, promised at once to make her a suitable allowance and to provide for her at his death.

"I don't ask you," he wrote, "to make your home with me, because it would be a dullish life for a girl like you to be buried in the country with an old fogey whose sole visitors are a few other old gentlemen of his own standing, but I hope you'll pay me a visit every summer and stay just as long as it pleases you. Shrewster will tell you that I was only waiting for what, alas! was never to be, namely, to see your poor husband gazetted into the army, to allow him a moderate income, and this, my dear Bessie, will at once be extended to you. And now, may God bless and comfort you in your sorrow.

"Ever your affectionate uncle,

"JOHN MADINGLEY."

"It is very kind of him," said Bessie; "everybody is very kind to me. Ah, Maurice, my dear, if you could but have lived to share it all with me!"

THE END.

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

DELIGHTED as we all were to escape from town two months ago, it is quite as delightful to return to our homes again, and proceed to settle down for the winter. If the prospect of more abundant fogs, and thicker ones to boot, than ever, somewhat daunts us, we soon forget anticipated ills in the present pleasure of meeting friends again, comparing our experiences while in villeggiatura, and looking round us with keenest relish of enjoyment at the various entertainments which London so generously offers. The only trouble of choice lies in selecting where to begin. Quite a crowd of new plays await the attention of lovers of the drama. If we wish to see what an earthquake is really like, without any desire to participate in its effects, we can gain our object by a visit to Drury Lane Theatre, where Mr. Augustus Harris has provided us with one in "Pleasure," regardless of expense. There, too, we may enjoy the festive sight of the "battle of flowers," of which we have heard and read so much. Beautiful Mary Anderson will attract us all in crowds to the theatre to see her in her double rôle in "The Winter's Tale." Those who love a hearty laugh will go and see "The Barrister" at the Comedy, one of those plays that delight discriminating audiences as much by the ingenuity and dexterity of their construction as by the genuine character of their fun. It is pleasant to record that this very successful play is by English authors, who have borrowed nothing from any foreign source, though there have been the usual good-natured attempts to trace this incident or that to some German or French farce. Mr. G. Manville Fenn and Mr. J. H. Darnley have triumphed in the use of home materials only, and may therefore be doubly and warmly congratulated upon their success.

A large part of the enjoyment of such plays as "The Barrister" is due to that subtle contagion of mirth which has never yet been analyzed nor satisfactorily explained. While we laugh ourselves, the laughter of others, taking all sorts of curious shapes and sounds, surrounds us and heightens our own. The remarkable contortions in which some of our neighbours indulge during their paroxysms of mirth and the extraordinary gurgles, crowings, or writhing silence of others form in themselves an amusement which would be alone irresistible food for laughter. Every

one must have observed this when seeing such plays as "Dandy Dick" (now established temporarily at Mr. Toole's theatre), and more especially when Mrs. John Wood is on the scene. There is one particular moment when this lady says not a word, but looks as she only can look; and the expressive glance fairly convulses the house. The veriest cynic must laugh at the laughter of others, even if it be beyond his dignity, or beneath it, to laugh at the delicious comedy itself.

Though "Loyal Love" is over, those who love to see beauty adorn the stage are all hoping that Mrs. Brown Potter may re-appear in some play better suited not only to her style but to a London audience. "The Pointsman," at the Olympic, gives Mr. Willard yet another opportunity of proving what a finished artist he is. In every detail of his present part he shows what careful study he gives to the elaboration of his performance, the result being that the audience hang upon his looks, words, and actions with an absorbed attention, which is the most flattering tribute they could pay to the art of the actor.

With the "Blue Bells of Scotland" ringing under the guidance of Miss Harriett Jay and Mr. Robert Buchanan at the Novelty Theatre, their harmonies heightened by the presence of pretty Miss Fortescue; and the "Bells of Haslemere" musically drawing half London to the Adelphi, we have no lack of "picturesque comedy" and the melodrama which Mr. Terriss so artistically and skilfully raises to the level of educated appreciation.

On the whole, the London theatres just now offer a varied and pleasant *menu* to the palate dramatic, and he who can find nothing to attract him in the large assortment of dishes daily advertised must be an impossible person indeed.

How many playgoers of to-day are aware that Mr. Chippendale—who in his day was perhaps the best Sir Peter Teazle who ever trod the boards—is still in the land of the living? Such, however, is the pleasing fact; and one Sunday, not long ago, the veteran actor completed his 86th year and spent the afternoon and evening surrounded by a small party of his friends and admirers in the quaint old house at Camberwell, which knows his popular wife—who is about to accompany Mr. Irving on his American tour—as its mistress. Mr. Chippendale is in excellent health, considering his great age, and on this occasion was in the highest spirits. His years have brought him deafness and some loss of brain power; but his recollection of men and scenes of olden days is still bright and accurate, and his choice and witty descriptions of them were a delight to his visitors.

Professor Crocker's educated horses at the Avenue Theatre form a most amusing entertainment, and a very interesting one to the lovers of the noble animal. That a horse can distinguish colours seems like a new discovery, and their firing off a gun is regarded by some persons as the most astonishing part of a very surprising

performance. The Court scene, in which a donkey is the judge, is a very comical one.

Who has not enjoyed the delightful novels of Miss Dora Russell, whose skill in delineating character is rivalled by her felicity of diction, and whose heroines behave like well-bred gentlewomen throughout the wonderful variety of incidents through which the authoress' powerful imagination carries them and her readers? All who have read her "Footprints in the Snow," one of the cleverest novels ever written, will be glad to see the announcement of another book from her pen, entitled "Hidden in My Heart." I often think that we omnivorous readers of books are not half grateful enough to those who supply us with the really good fiction that delights our leisure. Is there any amusement in the whole world worth comparing with that of reading? Yet we calmly accept all the abundance that is poured out before us, lightly blame and sparsely praise while we seldom indeed think of waiving a grateful thought to the writer who has charmed us with a fascinating story. What should we do without books? Life would be but a shady place to some of us if we could not turn our thoughts into the pleasant pasturage of fiction every now and then. Some one has said that no man can say his days are hard if his evenings are good. How many evenings are made delightful by books? The day's work is brightened by the anticipation of the hour or two to be spent with a favourite author when the lamps are lighted and the world shut out. The greatest deprivation to those who have lost their sight must be the loss of books. To be read to is well enough, but it is never quite the same as reading to oneself. We linger over a particular passage, read on a few pages, and revert again to the lines that have struck us as containing a truth never clothed in language for us before, though it may have hovered almost intangibly about our consciousness. We ponder it deeply, and it sinks into the mind, to influence it, may be, for ever. If we are only read to, it is different. We think, "There is a beautiful thought there," but as the reader calmly proceeds on his way, we are carried from it and pass it by almost unknowing.

And again, what reader knows exactly how to skip in accordance with the taste of those to whom he reads? There are some books of which one would not willingly miss a line. There are others the perusal of which is quite a saltatory exercise for the mind, a series of gymnastic performances for the attention. Who could ever "skip with me and skip as I," to paraphrase the poet's invitation to the thirsty fly? No one, surely. Grateful, indeed, we ought to be who can enjoy the rare delights of literature through the eye, instead of only through the ear.

“MY TEARS FLOW FAST.”

My tears flow fast, and yet my heart is burning.

So many tears should drown love's ardent flame ;

Or else my flaming heart should dry my tears.

In spite of that my poor heart burns, and tears flow on the same.

Come, place thy cool hand on my burning brow,

Come, kiss these eyes that ever search for thee.

Oh, soothe me, sweet, sing me a little song to lull my pain !

Thy gentle voice *alone* can still my heart, and make all evil flee.

JOSEPH FORSTER.

LONDON SOCIETY.

NOVEMBER, 1887.

A CRACK COUNTY.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT,"
"A REAL GOOD THING," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A VERY SELECT HUNT.

THE real name of the Hunt was the Morbey Anstead. But in sporting circles it was always called "The Mutual Adoration." In fact, so generally was this latter appellation employed that most people were apt to forget it possessed any other.

As the "Mutual Adoration" they were known far and wide, but although there was not a finer country in Great Britain than that which they had the good fortune to hunt, the pack was not popular with strangers. Year after year the same faces might be seen at covert side; very few new ones ever appeared amongst them.

Rich young men with large studs, plenty of money and a desire to get rid of it, such as are invariably welcome in most country places; officers spending their long leave; fathers of families hampered by the care of so many young ones, but as keen about hunting as ever, did not choose Morbey Anstead as their headquarters.

This was the more remarkable, because the town itself offered many advantages. It was clean, healthy, well situated on the top of a breezy hill, and moreover abundantly stocked with good inns and excellent stabling. But alas! both inns and stables stood empty.

And yet people who had been to Morbey Anstead once, never complained of it as a bad place from which to enjoy the chase. On the contrary, they praised it highly; but what they *did* complain of very loudly and very bitterly, were the manners of the "Mutual Adoration" Hunt. As strangers they went amongst

that fastidious crew and as strangers they came away, feeling that if they hunted from Morbey Anstead all their days, such they would remain. For after riding behind these exclusives the whole season, you were but too apt to find your existence overlooked just as much at the end of it as at the beginning.

Now there is no denying the fact that folks don't like this sort of thing; and various were the remarks made; often not altogether of a laudatory description. It may be vanity, but it is also human nature to desire some recognition from your fellow-creatures.

"Upon my soul, we might just as well be so much dirt," quoth one incensed sportsman.

"Dirt! say pitch," answered his companion. "For they *do* condescend to make the acquaintance of Mother Earth now and again."

"Ha, ha! very good, very good," said a third. "The worst of it's, though, after a bit a fellow begins to wonder what the deuce is the matter with him, when he goes out hunting and not a soul will say a word, or recognize his presence. He fancies that the fault must lie with himself, and that ain't by any means a pleasant feeling."

"True," put in a fourth. "But when you have seen a little more of the M. A.'s, then you turn round and enquire what the devil is the matter with *them*?"

"They are so confounded exclusive!" sighed the son of a grocer, who had taken to hunting, thinking he would get elevated into County society.

"My dear fellow," said the first speaker, contemptuously, "the whole thing lies in a nut-shell, and I for one say that the Mutual Adorationites are more to be pitied than blamed. They have only one idea in their heads, and that's hunting. They can think of nothing else, talk of nothing else. Their brains get brutalized, and their manners suffer in consequence. My own belief is that this rudeness and reticence proceeds from a very simple cause. They are not wise enough to know any better;" and so on, and on *ad infinitum*, for the malcontents were very numerous.

This remark happened to get round to the ears of those for whom it was not intended. Such remarks always do. They travel with marvellous rapidity, and generally land in the precise quarter where they are calculated to do the largest amount of mischief.

The indignation of the Mutual Adorationites was quite comical.

Not know any better indeed! They flattered themselves they knew a very *great deal* better than to take up with every Tom, Dick and Harry who put on a red coat and chose to appear outside a horse.

They liked to know who people were, where they came from, how far their ancestors could be traced, and in what sort of society they moved, before jumping down their throats, and even then there was no hurry. It was always better to take plenty of time to consider about these things, for fear of making a mistake. It would never answer for them—the Mutual Adorationites—to incorporate a person into their select body, and then find that that person would not do! There had been such a case on record, and every M. A. to a man was agreed it must never happen again. And to do them justice, this was their first and last error of familiarity. Under the circumstances, it will not perhaps be difficult to understand how it came about that the Hunt was a small one. It was still further reduced by being divided and split up into sections.

First came the “riff-raff”—the kind of folks whom the M. A.’s saw year after year, and ignored entirely. They might be very good fellows in their way, but, to use their own expressive language, “they did not tumble to them.”

Fortunately for these gentlemen—who constituted the larger portion of the field—they were able to form a society of their own, which enabled them to survive the frigidity of their fellow Nimrods.

Then came the “Half-and-halfers”—people whom the Mutual Adorationites, for various reasons, did not wholly condemn, even while they could not altogether accept.

These were tolerated, passively and in a luke-warm fashion, which proved more galling to some than direct avoidance.

On the recurrence of each hunting season, and after an absence probably of several months, they would find themselves greeted by a careless nod and a muttered “How do.” Or if the M. A. happened to be in an unusually amiable and loquacious mood, he might even go the length of saying, “Fine day. Looks like a scenting morning.”

But this was quite an oratorical effort, and generally meant, “There! I’ve done the civil to you, because you are a covert owner, but for goodness sake don’t expect me to go talking to you any more to-day.”

As a matter of fact, no real M. A. would ever unbend so far as to be seen carrying on a conversation with a “Half-and-half.” They kept their conversations and their ideas for themselves. They were too precious, or perhaps too scarce to be showered upon the world of “outsiders.” Anyhow, they were not scattered like pearls before swine.

The *bona-fide* Mutual Adorationites did not number more than a dozen.

When they went a-hunting they formed a coterie apart.

They rode together, talked or rather kept silence together, and jogged home together.

All the rest of the field were made to feel themselves without the pale.

But the M. A.'s, for all their exclusiveness, were not jovial. There was none of that friendly, harmless, good-natured chatter going on amongst them which is one of the characteristic features of most covert sides, and often is carried to too great an excess.

- Occasionally one of their number would jerk out an observation, and his companion would grunt back a reply. But there was no mirth, no jollity; no fun and geniality.

They were stately, and solemn, and dull to a degree. As for a joke—but there! they never condescended to anything half so vulgar or so abominably plebeian. A joke would have been considered bad form.

The mere fact of riding about in each other's company seemed to afford a kind of sedate pleasure. Any interchange of thought was quite superfluous.

Unfortunately, their very exclusiveness rendered them few in numbers.

Death and absence had thinned their ranks to such an extent that at the period when our story commences, there were not more than a dozen legitimate Mutual Adorationites left. Still, they sufficed to maintain the character of the Hunt, and effectually drove away any rash stranger, who, tempted by the beauty of the country, and the convenience of Morbey Anstead as a sporting centre, took it into his head to come out with the hounds.

First and foremost ranked the master, Lord Littelbrane.

He was a small, fair, colourless, insignificant-looking man, about forty-five years of age, with a drab complexion, and hair to match. He wore an eye-glass, which stood him in good stead, since the number of persons he contrived *not* to see at one of his meets was truly remarkable. He also was distinguished by a stony stare very disconcerting to its object. His eyes always seemed to look just a little above his neighbour's head, making that individual feel there *must* be something wrong or queer about his hat.

Another famous M. A. was old General Prosieboy, or The Squasher, as he was lovingly called by his intimates. He was a most useful personage, and had derived his sobriquet from the fact that he could annihilate an unobjectionable stranger better than any other single M. A. in existence. His method was very simple. He discharged a volley of oaths at the offender, and as these were by no means choice, generally forcible, and nearly always unprovoked, nine times out of ten, the audacious enemy who had dared to address an M. A. without waiting to be first spoken to by him, retired in dismay, and never repeated the hazardous experiment.

Once, and once only, it was said that The Squasher met his match. The gentleman was fresh from California, and displayed

a fluency, a facility and an originality of language, which fairly discomfited his opponent, whose vocabulary was limited in comparison.

Taking him all in all, Captain Straightem might fairly be reckoned the flower of the Mutual Adorationites. He was the best dressed, the coolest, the most silent, and least gregarious of the party. He had never been known to laugh, and seldom seen to smile. His brethren were loud in his praise. Of the whole dozen good fellows who formed their ranks, he (always excepting themselves) was voted the best. As a specimen of the right sort, he shone pre-eminent.

He kept himself aloof, and never by any chance fraternized with the vulgar herd. As the owner of a large estate in the county, he was a man of considerable position, and looked up to accordingly, both by those who had, and by those who had not, the honour of his acquaintance.

And even his enemies respected him for the brilliant way in which he rode to hounds. They admitted that he had some excuse for his extremely good opinion of himself, but the other M. A.'s they declared had none.

Still there was no doubt that the Mutual Adorationites were on remarkably friendly terms with No One. It must have been the case, since nearly everybody else was dubbed "a creature, a brute, or an outsider." Nobody was good enough for them—at least, nobody under a baron. Yet the singular part of the whole business was this. If any one had told them that their Hunt was not popular, and that they were the sole cause of its unpopularity, they would have received the statement with a burst of incredulous indignation. The truth was, they had not the faculty of seeing things from any point of view but their own. Hence the limitedness of their vision.

CHAPTER II.

NECK OR NOTHING.

It would have been difficult to conceive of a more melancholy day for the opening meet of the season than was Tuesday, the first of November, 188—.

When Captain Straightem's servant called his master about half-past eight o'clock, that gentleman turned in bed like a lazy porpoise rolling on the top of the water, yawned, and murmured in a voice muffled by blankets: "What sort of a day is it, Dickinson?"

"A tremendously thick fog, sir," came the prompt reply, uttered in tones of unsympathetic cheerfulness. "You can't see twenty yards a'ead of you."

"The devil!" exclaimed Captain Straightem, wakening into sudden life, and springing out of bed, so as to ascertain for himself the exact state of the weather.

But to his disgust, on looking out of the window, he perceived at a glance that for once Dickinson had not exaggerated matters.

A dense fog lay over all the land, enshrouding both hills and valleys in its weird and ghostly embrace. It rested like a soft, grey sheet upon the fields, toning down to a sombre tint the bright green grass. As for the laurel hedges growing on either side of the drive, they were impregnated with moisture, and great wet drops rested on their glossy leaves.

Everything was dark, everything was dull, everything was damp.

He looked up at the sky, but could detect no break or gleam of light.

The prospects of the chase did not appear promising. Captain Straightem stifled an oath as he applied the razor to his clean-shaven face.

"Confounded bad luck! Still it may clear by-and-bye," he muttered, half-an-hour later on, when he sat down to his solitary breakfast in the big oak dining-room. "And at any rate it won't do not to go to the meet."

But as the fog showed no signs of giving, he drew an armchair to the fire, toasted his toes, and read the newspaper, waiting and hoping that the weather would improve. It was late before he started, and even then, instead of galloping to covert as was his wont, he allowed his smart little hog-maned hack to proceed at a comparatively leisurely pace.

Consequently by the time he reached the place of meeting, the majority of the field had already assembled; but although it was now long past the advertised hour, Lord Littelbrane had not attempted to make a move.

As a matter of fact, it would not have been easy to hunt, since objects at a distance of only a few yards were almost undistinguishable. To ride to hounds if they ran fast—which they so frequently do on these mild, damp days, when the heavy state of the atmosphere seems to prevent scent from rising and dispersing—would tax the powers of the keenest and most daring fox-hunter in existence.

"Deuced bore this d—d fog," growled his lordship, as soon as Captain Straightem joined the small and select circle which invariably gathered round him at the meet, as if to protect his noble person from any possible onslaught of the vulgar herd. "Deuced bore."

"Deuced," echoed Captain Straightem, laconically but sympathetically.

"'Pon my soul, I hardly know what to do. Whether to take the hounds home or not. All these 'Arries,' looking round con-

temptuously, "will feel terribly aggrieved if we don't show them some sort of sport on the first day of the season."

"Never mind them," put in General Prosieboy. "It's ourselves we've got to think of. Ourselves first, our horses second, our hounds third."

"What do you say to it, Straightem?" asked Lord Littelbrane. For, as before explained, Captain Straightem was a feature of the Hunt, and his opinion went for a great deal.

"Well, if I were you, I should wait a bit longer before giving up. Folks don't like to be disappointed on these kind of occasions, and it's just on the cards that the weather may clear."

And sure enough it did, though at no time in a satisfactory manner.

But at twelve o'clock the sun struggled so gallantly with the fog, that for a few minutes he actually forced it to disperse before his pale radiance.

Loud were the congratulations, and universal the satisfaction, when Lord Littelbrane, without losing a moment, gave orders for the proceedings of the day to commence, and hounds were at once trotted off at a brisk pace, to draw a covert close by.

Half-an-hour elapsed, and sadness and despondency once more fell upon the spirits of the field; for the improvement in the weather proved only temporary, and the heavy mist seemed to roll down worse than ever. Phœbus turned white and sickly like an ailing child, then sullenly hid his face.

"If this goes on we shall *have* to give it up, whether we like it or not," said Lord Littelbrane gloomily.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before a loud "gane farrard aw-a-ay" proclaimed that Reynard had left the snug undergrowth of the covert. There was evidently a hot scent in the open, for the hounds dashed out after him, close at his brush, and almost directly were lost to vision, engulfed, as it were, by the enveloping fog.

They threw their tongues merrily, and could be heard, though not seen.

And now began a curious chase; for every man had to ride by ear instead of by eye, and he who was deaf stood but a sorry chance.

Foxes are famed for their subtilty; and this one, as if on purpose to baffle his pursuers, chose about as rough and awkward a route as he could have selected in the whole country.

Fences loomed dark and formidable, their dimensions increased instead of diminished by the imperfect light. It was simply impossible to tell what they were like, until you were close upon them.

Horses sniffed the damp air through their open nostrils, and discharged it with disgust. They looked round suspiciously at this grey and unrecognizable world, were nervous and timid, and

distrusted the commonest object. A log of wood, a cow, a stone, filled them with apprehension. And all this time, borne on the vaporous atmosphere, rang out the eager, murderous notes of hounds celebrated for their slaying qualities.

They were positively racing ahead.

But alack! alack! How to keep up with them? The task seemed well nigh impossible, and each man realized to his bitter cost that there are some days in every season when hunting is attended with more pain than pleasure. Days when hounds, fences, elements defy you simultaneously. Five minutes sufficed to place the field in disorder. Their ranks opened and spread in every direction; and dire was the confusion that resulted.

Only Burnett (the huntsman), Captain Straightem, and a couple of hard-riding farmers succeeded in getting well away. Their nerve and promptitude served them in good stead; but they had to ride as they had never ridden in their lives before. It was a case of neck or nothing.

Friendly gates could not be taken advantage of, as usual; for to-day the Pack would have vanished from view in the time that they took to open. The only chance of keeping with hounds was to keep close to their heels and negotiate every possible and impossible fence that came in the way. Providence must provide for the rest.

Crash, crash go the timbers of a stiff double oxer, as the gallant quartette fly it, each man charging a different place.

One of the farmers is down—no, his horse recovers himself. He staggers for a pace or two, then gallops on as before, fearful of losing his companions.

Suddenly is heard a shrill whistle.

It is the first intimation given to the pursuers that they are close to a railway.

“By God!” exclaims Burnett in agitated tones; “the hounds will be cut to pieces.” For he knows by the sound that they are just ahead.

He calls them by name; first in commanding, then in entreating, finally in frantic language. Never has his horn given forth such loud and urgent blasts.

But their blood is up, and they heed him not.

In another second an express train dashes into their midst, and two of the best bitches in the whole Pack will never go a-hunting again, or stretch their fleet limbs over the broad pastures. Burnett is in despair.

He wrings his hands like a woman, and as he dismounts hastily and bends over the mangled carcasses of his dead darlings—those hounds that were his pride and his delight—the tears gather in his eyes, whilst his honest, weather-beaten face twitches with sorrow.

“Darn this fog,” he exclaims resentfully. “It ain’t fit to hunt in.”

But the companions of poor Milkmaid and Merrylass evidently

hold a different opinion. With deadly zest and joyous music they fling forward after their fox, every murderous instinct awakened and desiring gratification.

A solitary horseman is with them now, and follows their bold career. Burnett has stayed with his hounds, the fog has swallowed up the two farmers, who, until this point, have maintained their own right well.

On the face of him who smiles so rarely a solemn smile has settled. To have bested the field is the one delight of his life. He can conceive of no higher pleasure.

Swish! And he tears through a great, black bullfinch, and is almost dragged from his saddle. Slap! And the bough of an overhanging tree catches him one on the mouth.

His countenance brightens still more, though the blood is spurt-ing from his lip. His pulses quicken and his eye dilates, for the dangers and the difficulties of this particular chase lend it a special charm. When he thinks it all over in his armchair after a good dinner, he will feel excusably triumphant and elated in proportion to the obstacles overcome.

But what is this black thing looming through the fog? Oh, for a ray of sunshine!

It might be a fence, it might be a house, it might be anything, for all he can tell.

The pulsations of his heart grow loud. He can hear them beating against his ribs. But the hounds have already disappeared beyond the mysterious barrier, and where they go he is determined to follow. Whatever this man's faults may be, he is brave and knows no fear.

Besides, he has beneath him one of the most perfect and resolute hunters that ever looked through a bridle. A hunter who has carried him for four seasons, and hardly put a foot wrong.

Captain Straightem leans forward in the saddle, pats his good horse's neck and speaks an encouraging word to him. Then he steadies him a trifle, and just when he is about to take off gives him his head. The animal knows his business, and is as courageous as a lion.

He springs from his hind legs, and oh!!!

Ten minutes afterwards, when Burnett, Lord Littelbrane, and some half-dozen others, riding in search of the hounds, came to the fence in question they prudently avoided it; and went through a bridle-gate, which they had the good fortune to espy, congratulating themselves on not being forced to jump such a regular man-trap.

And yet the nerves of most of them were inclined to be more shaken than if they had made the attempt. For an unexpected sight met their vision.

Hard by, lying there on the ground all by himself, some ten or twelve yards distant from the fence, was Captain Straightem.

His horse had galloped away, and could nowhere be seen, though a track of red blood seemed to tell that he must have been badly hurt in his fall.

For the thin dark line of treacherous metal, which has been responsible for so many accidents in the hunting-field, was bent and twisted, and in parts tufts of fine chestnut-coloured hair adhered to the rusty wire.

Captain Straightem lay there quite still. He never moved or spoke when his companions crowded around him.

His face was turned upwards to the sodden sky, one hand was clenched, and held between its stiffened fingers a bunch of grass torn from its roots, and in his wide open eyes there rested a dull and vacant look, which somehow struck terror in the hearts of the bystanders.

It filled them with a nameless dread, a horrible suspicion, which, staring blankly into each other's sobered faces, they had, in the first startlingness of the shock, not courage to mention.

And the soft fog curled itself around the dark twigs of the hedge, and as a memento of its passage left hanging from each pointed thorn a trembling drop. Even in that short space of time it had silvered the fallen man's hair and covered with a white, humid covering his red coat, his snowy breeches, his top-boots, and all the brave insignia of the chase, with which only that morning he had sallied forth, full of life and spirits.

CHAPTER III.

THE MUTUAL ADORATIONITES SUSTAIN AN IRREPARABLE LOSS.

LORD LITTELBRANE was the first to speak.

"I fear this is a bad business," he said huskily. "Does any one know if there was a doctor out hunting to-day?"

"Yes, I do, my lord," answered Burnett, touching his cap. "I saw Mr. Smith of Cottlebury at the meet, riding that there rat-tailed grey cob of his."

"Go and fetch him then this minute."

"Yes, my lord."

"And hark you, Burnett, don't spare your horse. For once in your life don't mind if you bring him back lame or not; only for God's sake find this Mr. Smith, and get him to come here immediately." It was not often that his lordship spoke at such length or with so much energy and decision. Burnett at once realized the gravity of the situation, and galloped off at full speed in the direction from which he had recently arrived.

When he had gone, Lord Littelbrane knelt down on the damp grass by the side of his prostrate friend, and putting out his hand, placed it under Captain Straightem's red coat, and over his

heart. "I can't hear it beat," he said tremulously, looking up with troubled eyes, at those who stood near. "It is horribly still, and there's a look about his face which I don't half like. Straightem, old boy," giving him a slight shake, "pull yourself together."

But no answer was forthcoming. Still the same unnatural quietude prevailed.

And now the truth, in all its solemnity and horror, began to force itself upon Lord Littelbrane's comprehension. Fiercely and feverishly he endeavoured to thrust it from him, but the thought grew and grew, and turned his blood to ice. He had seen too many bad accidents in the hunting field not to know what this portended. Only last year a young rough rider of his own had been killed whilst following the hounds.

There was the same expression on the lad's face as on Captain Straightem's. He recalled it with a shudder. His nerves had been shaken then, but now he felt as if they would give way altogether. He seemed stunned and dazed by the magnitude of the disaster.

For this man, lying here so pale and still, was his friend. He had not so many that he could afford to lose his best one—the only one really after his heart. Captain Straightem was endeared to him through many ties of association, such as when youths grow up, bind them closely together. They had been born in the same county, and in the same year. As boys, they had gone to the same school and displayed an equal amount of stupidity. As men, horses and hounds proved an unfailing bond of union between them. They knew each other's peculiarities, and their ideas of the position and importance of a Mutual Adorationite were identical.

And besides all this, Lord Littelbrane was not only proud of Captain Straightem, but he entertained a species of veneration for him. There was not another man in all the Hunt who could ride like the gallant captain. If any serious misfortune had now happened to him, who could he—Lord Littelbrane—depend upon in future to uphold the honour of their sacred body, and show these rough-and-tumble fellows the real scientific way to cross a country?

And if—if things were as he feared, who would jog home with him at his own peculiar pace, after a hard day's hunting, not taxing his conversational powers by an irritating flow of small talk, but only at long intervals giving vent to some choice and almost monosyllabic remark. Then, too, who would support him through thick and thin, in the various difficulties raised by covert-owners, farmers, poultry-losers, subscribers, &c.

A lump came into Lord Littelbrane's throat, which threatened to impede his respiration. He turned his head hastily away, so that none present should perceive the moisture which suddenly dimmed his eyes.

Meanwhile a couple of sheep hurdles had been torn up from a turnip field close by, and on these they laid Captain Straightem's body, after first raising it reverently from the ground.

Then the mournful little procession marched slowly and sadly through the wet fields, until at length a road was reached. Near this road stood a tidy cottage, and in its parlour they deposited their burden on the sofa.

Lord Littelbrane would not leave his friend, even for a moment. He kept his eyes riveted on Captain Straightem's face, in the hope of seeing some sign of life return to it. But one of the party kept watch outside the door, and paced restlessly up and down the road, waiting and longing for Doctor Smith's arrival.

So the minutes passed anxiously away. They seemed interminable, and the gloom of the atmosphere coincided with the gloom of their spirits.

For although they tried by every restorative they could think of, to bring colour to the fallen man's cheek, warmth to his flesh, and light to his eye, all their attempts proved vain.

At last, the sound of hoofs was heard, and in another second, Burnett emerged like a giant from the fog, followed by Doctor Smith on his grey cob. Both horses were panting, and gave evidence of the speed at which they had travelled.

The doctor dismounted, and after a few words of explanation from Lord Littelbrane, who came out to greet him, flung the reins to Burnett, and disappeared within the cottage. Arrived there, one look was enough to convince him that here were no bones to set, no cuts to strap, or wounds to dress.

Captain Straightem was past the aid of man. Not all the skill and science in the world could avail him now. He had gone where such things were unable to penetrate.

Doctor Smith shook his head, and his countenance assumed an unusually grave expression.

"Well!" asked Lord Littelbrane in an awestruck voice, for he knew what was coming:

"Is there—is there any chance of his getting over it?"

"Not in this world," said the doctor seriously. "Captain Straightem is dead, and has been so for some time."

"Dead!" exclaimed the other with sharp anguish. "Oh! no, not dead, surely not dead. I will telegraph to London for the best advice. Somebody *must* pull him through."

"Neither I, nor anybody else, can do him any good, poor fellow! I only wish that we could."

At this terrible confirmation of his worst fears, Lord Littelbrane sank down on his knees by Captain Straightem's side, and buried his face in his hands.

Absolute silence prevailed throughout the room. None felt inclined to break it. Only every now and again could be heard a suppressed sob, which escaped from his lordship almost involuntarily.

In spite of his vapidty, his reserve, and curious conceit he had a heart. During many years he had striven to conceal its existence, but now it burst through that veneer of impenetrability, on which, as a Mutual Adorationite, he had long prided himself.

Something seemed to give way within him, and he bowed his head and wept like a child.

The effort to maintain a dignified stoicism was beyond his strength.

And those who had never liked him—who had called him a fool, a prig, an aristocrat—thought better of him at this moment than they had ever done. The resentment of years vanished. The slights and insults of seasons were forgotten. For the first time almost in their lives, they felt that he was human: a creature like themselves, who loved, and mourned, and suffered. "He ain't such a bad chap after all!" they murmured to one another. "It's his way and very likely he don't mean anything by it. We have been foolish enough to take offence where probably none was intended."

Meantime Dr. Smith was making a minute examination in order to ascertain the exact cause of death. As a hunting man himself, he felt an unusual interest in the case. He soon discovered what had happened.

"Poor chap," he said, in his rough but sympathetic way. (At any other time Lord Littelbrane would have winced at hearing his best friend called a "poor chap," but he was too thoroughly upset and startled out of his usual groove to take any notice now.) "He has broken his neck. It is quite clear to my mind, that when he fell, he landed on the point of his chin, which caused the entire head to be violently jerked backwards, from which dislocation of the cervical vertebræ ensued." Then he looked commiseratingly at Lord Littelbrane, and added:

"Don't take on so, my lord. This is a dreadful business, but it should at least be some consolation to you to know that death was instantaneous, and that your friend was spared all pain."

But Lord Littelbrane shook his sleek, fair head, and refused to be comforted.

The shock was so great and so entirely unexpected, that for once in his life it made him forget himself and his dignity. Later on it would be a cause of shame, when he reflected that he had allowed these "outsiders" to see that he possessed feelings and emotions, and was not the iceberg he strove to appear.

But the "outsiders" respected his grief and, as before stated, thought none the worse of him in consequence.

While all this was going on, a considerable crowd had collected round the cottage.

Ill news travels apace, as the saying tells us, and stragglers began to pour in from all sides.

"What dead? Straightem dead? You don't mean it!"

"Yes, I do though. Terrible thing. Been dead an hour. Had a bad fall and broke his neck."

"Dear me! How dreadful! How did it happen?"

"The old story. Wire. Farmer deserves to be strung up."

The above were a specimen of the remarks that went the round. Everybody looked shocked and saddened. For even those who had not known Captain Straightem personally, knew him by sight, and were sobered by the intelligence of the disaster that had befallen him.

Men fear death; and none so much as the strong and healthy, whose minds refuse to dwell on the possibility, and whose physical vitality laughs it to scorn. But this sudden cutting off of one of their number brought home, in a forcible way, the dangers of hunting.

What had happened to Captain Straightem, might have happened equally to themselves. They—not he—might have been lying dead inside the homely cottage.

The mere idea was enough to shake their nerves, and to send a cold shudder down their spines. Sadly and quietly they gradually dispersed, whilst Burnett collected his hounds—only twenty-one couple now, instead of twenty-two—and moved slowly off in the direction of the kennels. His orders were, that they should not come out again for a fortnight. There was to be no hunting in the Morbey Anstead country during that time.

If Lord Littelbrane could do nothing else, he was determined to pay respect to the dead man's memory.

And so ended the first day of the season. It had both begun and finished badly, and the Mutual Adorationites had received a blow which quite prostrated them. For their king was no more, and they knew of none to fill his place. Where was the man who could combine such brilliant horsemanship with such hauteur, such exclusiveness and reserve?

CHAPTER IV.

LORD LITTELBRANE FEELS LONELY.

A WEEK after the sad event recorded in the last chapter, Lord Littelbrane and General Prosieboy sat down to a *tête-à-tête* dinner at the house of the former.

His lordship was a bachelor, and not much given to running after the fair sex.

As a matter of fact, few of the Mutual Adorationites were married men. Mutual adoration did not seem to work well in the bosom of one's family. Not many wives admired and looked up to their husbands as they ought. They had a nasty knack of bringing their lords and masters' weak points to light. So said the

M. A.'s. Anyhow they did not approve of matrimony as an institution. It broke up their ranks, and introduced an altogether new and unwelcome element. Once a man married he was never quite the same. He was no longer allowed to follow his own judgment, and his visiting list soon showed a sad deterioration.

For this, and many other reasons, it resulted that if one of the genuine Mutual Adorationites was rash enough to turn Benedict, he was generally treated with a considerable amount of frigidity for a very long time afterwards.

It took several years before the offence was forgiven, and even if the bride were altogether charming, she never found herself wholly accepted. The M. A.'s to one man, felt that they owed her a grudge, for weakening dear Adolphus's or dear Sidney's allegiance to their sacred body. But as regards Lord Littelbrane, he could not help entertaining an uneasy conviction that some day or other he was bound to get married. An heir to the title was imperative. He had told himself this for the last ten or twelve years, during which he made sundry virtuous resolutions, and repeatedly determined to sacrifice his bachelor independence; but so far these good resolves had come to nothing.

He would be forty-six next birthday, and Littelbrane Castle was still without a mistress. Match-making mammas, possessing ambitious daughters, had angled for him in vain, and now, in despair, they had given him up as a bad job, and reluctantly turned their attention elsewhere. Both the late Captain Straightem and his lordship seemed equally proof against feminine blandishments, and it was rumoured in the county that they would never take a wife to weaken, if not destroy their intimacy, and prevent them from being constantly together.

But since his friend's sudden death, Lord Littelbrane's whole mental condition had undergone a complete alteration. Circumstances had brought about a curious change in his ideas. When he looked round at his great big barrack of a house, with its endless rooms, swarms of servants, and absence of any real comfort, it struck him all at once that he was very lonely, that many a labouring man with a stout red-cheeked wife and half a dozen babies, was happier far than he. He began to wonder what it would feel like to be the father of a family, to set his little children on his knee, and play with their golden curls. A strange yearning came over him for sympathy and companionship—a sympathy and companionship even closer than that which he had just lost.

And thus wondering and speculating, his thoughts reverted to a certain Lady De Fochsey, who was both young and pretty, and the widow of a deceased baronet. She was a very smart, natty little lady, who in her scarlet jacket and white waistcoat, did credit to his Hunt. The Mutual Adorationites all knew her, and on account of her good looks, received her as one of themselves. True he had never paid her any attention, but that might

easily be rectified, and he fancied she would accept his advances graciously.

Still, it was a desperate plunge, this which he contemplated taking—so desperate that nothing but the loss of his friend could have made him entertain the idea in earnest.

His first notion was to invite Lady De Fochsey to come and take a quiet little dinner with him, explaining that he felt very melancholy and required cheerful society. He was convinced she was cheerful. Her laugh rang out so merrily at the covert side, that it had once or twice actually aroused his curiosity as to the cause of her mirth. Women ought to be cheerful. He liked them so, as long as they were not "loud." He hoped she was not "loud," and wished he knew her well enough to make quite sure.

But when he came to consider the slightness of his acquaintanceship with Lady De Fochsey, he arrived at the conclusion that it was out of the question for him to ask her to dinner in this sudden and informal manner. So, as his solitude was rapidly becoming unbearable, he invited old General Prosieboy instead, who although he did not much appreciate the Castle *cuisine*, liked being able to say: "Oh, ah! my dear fellow! If you've nothing better to do to-night, come and take pot-luck with me. Damme though, I forgot, I'm dining with Lord Littelbrane. See you some other time I hope." But he always took good care to leave that "other time" indefinite, and never alluded to it when next he met the "dear fellow." The dining room at Littelbrane Castle was very large and also very cold. No matter how big the fire, it only warmed one portion of the apartment. The old windows rattled, the old doors creaked, and the wind seemed to blow in at all sorts of possible and impossible places.

Round and round the dinner-table stalked a pompous, grey-haired butler and a couple of solemnly-stupid footmen. These worthies took special care to prevent their master and his guest from indulging too freely in the pleasures of the table.

The soup might have been a liquid medicine, to be taken cautiously—one to two table-spoons in a little water. The fish was served out in such liliputian quantities, that it was only an aggravation to a hungry, healthy man. The entrée consisted of a tiny oyster patty apiece, with one single oyster in its midst—that is for the eaters. There were plenty of patties on the dish, but they were smuggled away with a sleight-of-hand that would have reflected credit upon Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke. This was the more provoking as General Prosieboy was fond of oysters.

Mutton? Yes! there was mutton certainly, but what was the good of that when you were helped to a slice that might have been carved from the breast of a lark.

And yet, night after night, Lord Littelbrane sat down to this mockery of a meal because he considered it to be "the thing!" He would rather go without a morsel and be waited upon by three

pompous men-servants, than he would dispense with their services, and help himself *as* he liked, and *how* he liked.

So much for Fashion.

But General Prosieboy was not exactly a fashionable man, and moreover he possessed a remarkably good appetite.

At home he invariably insisted on his parlour-maid putting each separate dish on the table. Then he *did* get something to eat. But really! at Littelbrane Castle, in spite of all the fine furniture, old armour, and retinue of servants, when he got up from the table he felt very nearly if not quite as hungry as when he sat down to it.

However, he was on his company manners, and stood too much in awe of Lord Littelbrane's exalted rank—his father had made all his money in Prosieboy's antibilious pills—to air his sentiments aloud. Had he done so they would probably have been translated by oaths. On the present occasion, with a mighty effort of self-control, he succeeded in maintaining a decorous silence, mentally determining to have up that excellent piece of cold beef he had had for luncheon, directly he reached home.

He fumed inwardly all the time the three great, silent sentinels were in the room, but when they removed their restraining presence, carrying everything eatable away with them that they could, the atmosphere seemed suddenly to have grown less oppressive. Then the two gentlemen drew up their chairs close to the fire-side, and placed the port and claret on the mantel-piece where it was easily get-at-able.

After consuming four or five glasses, the strings of their tongues gradually became unloosened. The Littelbrane wine was good, and General Prosieboy revenged himself upon *it*, for not having dined.

"Ahem!" he said communicatively, and with the air of a man who considers he is imparting a wonderful piece of intelligence. "I forgot to tell you before, but I've seen him."

His lordship at that moment was thinking quite sentimentally—thanks to the Château Lafitte—of Lady De Fochsey's rosy, smiling face, her trim figure and sparkling blue eyes.

"Eh! what! Seen him? Seen who?" he asked with rather a guilty start.

"Why, the new man. The man who comes in for all poor old Straightem's property. The nephew, in short."

"Have you, by Jove! And what's he like? Can we have anything to do with him?" And as he made the enquiry, Lord Littelbrane's countenance assumed an expression which seemed to say that he, for one, was convinced the Mutual Adorationites could *not* be hand in glove with a total stranger hailing from the colonies.

"Impossible," said General Prosieboy emphatically.

His lordship gave a sigh of relief.

"Why?" he asked, subsiding into his usual languid state, which forcibly suggested a torpid liver.

"Because, as far as I can judge, he's the wrong sort altogether."

"Ah! I expected so, and should have been very much astonished had he proved anything else."

"It seems he has lived all his life in Australia, and has never been to England before. In fact, one could almost tell as much from looking at him. Colonist is stamped upon him from the crown of his hat to the sole of his boots."

"Poor devil!" exclaimed Lord Littelbrane commiseratingly.

"Did Captain Straightem never mention this bushman of a relative?" asked the General, with an elderly man's curiosity. "I don't seem to have heard of him."

"Oh! yes, lots of times. But never without a shudder. Poor Harry was so refined," sighing heavily. "He told me, only the morning of his death, that the fellow had arrived unexpectedly and proposed running down to Straightem Court to pay him a visit. 'Awful bore,' said Harry, 'and the worst of it is, I don't know how the deuce to put him off. He's got a sort of right to come, since unless I marry and have children, he's the next heir to the property.'"

"He has acquired a most unfortunate right to it now," said General Prosieboy lugubriously.

"Yes, worse luck. Times are indeed sadly changed. I wonder though if I ought to be civil to the man on Harry's account?" And Lord Littelbrane looked uneasily at his companion.

"I really don't see any necessity for it. It does your Lordship's heart immense credit even to have suggested such a thing; but I assure you, you can't possibly associate with this aborigine. If you had only seen the creature as I saw him to-day at the railway station, dressed in a brown velvet suit, with a flaring red tie, and a pair of checked trousers that reminded one of a chess-board, you would have recognised, in spite of your natural kindness, that it is quite out of the question for a man in your position and of your rank to notice so very peculiar a person. Why, damme! he wears clothes that are enough in themselves to make anybody who has the remotest notion of what is customary in civilized society, cut him on the spot."

"And there is such a lot in clothes," murmured his lordship. "I think it was Kingsley who said, you can transform any gentleman into a blackguard—at least as far as outward appearances go, by simply taking away his white collar and substituting a coloured scarf in its stead. By-the-bye, what is the duffer's name? It's not Straightem, I know, thank God for that."

"No, it's Jarrett—Robert P. Jarrett—I saw it painted on his portmanteau."

"I wonder if Mr. Robert P. Jarrett means to favour us with his presence out hunting."

"I expect he is sure to," returned the General. "These Australians mostly take kindly to sport."

"Confound the fellow! We shall have him jumping on my hounds, and making that an excuse to scrape acquaintance with me. Really Prosieboy, if he turns out objectionable, as I fully expect from your description of him, you must come to the rescue."

"With all my heart, my Lord," replied his companion, dilating his nostrils, and sniffing the air like an old war-horse who smells powder and is eager to begin the fray. "You leave Mr. Robert P. Jarrett to me. I'll soon settle him, never fear."

"That's all right. Remember Prosieboy, I count upon you should any emergency arise."

And with these words, Lord Littelbrane dismissed the subject.

A long silence succeeded, during which host and guest lit a couple of cigars and smoked away steadily. The occupation evidently strained every faculty; for conversation languished, both feeling that after their recent outburst of eloquence they needed time to recruit their forces.

General Prosieboy was the first to make a remark. It was scarcely as original as might have been expected from the long period of incubation required to give it birth.

"Feels cold to-night," he said. "I think we shall have a frost."

"Oh! Ah! very likely. Time of year we may expect them," answered his lordship.

Another silence of five minutes followed this brilliant sally.

Then the General again gave vent to an oracular utterance:

"Shouldn't wonder if we had snow before long."

"No, nor I."

Whereupon they both puffed away at their cigars harder than ever.

Their ideas appeared totally exhausted. Even the weather failed to furnish a further supply.

But by-and-bye a large lump of coal fell down on the grate with a clatter. Lord Littelbrane seized the tongs, and stooped to pick it up. This broke the spell.

"Awful bore when coals tumble about," he said.

"Awful," replied General Prosieboy.

Puff, puff, puff. Apparently neither of them could think of anything more to say. The General could only talk when he was drunk or in a rage. Take away his oaths and his liquor and he was nowhere. As for Lord Littelbrane he never could understand why when people dine together they should be supposed to keep up a perpetual chatter. What was the pleasure of it in comparison with the fatigue?

Eleven o'clock strikes, and General Prosieboy rises from his seat, and throws away the end of his cigar.

"Think I must be going home," he says.

"Must you?" rejoins Lord Littelbrane passively. He never presses his guests to stay after half-past ten. In the hunting season he invariably keeps early hours.

"Yes, think so. Good night, my lord. Hope you will cheer up before long."

General Prosieboy's hand is on the handle of the door as he speaks. In another moment he would have vanished into the corridor.

His lordship plucked up all his courage, and made a desperate effort.

"By the way," he said, whilst a flush rose to his sallow face, "what's your opinion of that little Lady De Fochsey? She's the right sort, ain't she?"

The question took General Prosieboy completely by surprise, but he was far too diplomatic a gentleman to express the astonishment that he felt.

"Oh, yes!" he answered in an off-hand way, seeing he was evidently desired to express approval. "Quite the right sort; a very nice little woman indeed. I know nothing whatever against her, except that she's rather too thick with some of the outsiders."

"Ah! she's young. She'll soon learn to distinguish, especially with the advantage of a little judicious guidance. But I'm keeping you standing; good night, Prosieboy, good night."

And so saying, Lord Littelbrane shook hands with his guest, and saw him out at the hall door. But this last remark of his host's had given the General much food for reflection.

No sooner was he fairly seated within the sheltering walls of his one-horse fly, than he drew a long breath of dismay.

"Thunder and lightning!" he exclaimed dejectedly. "So that's the little game, is it? Why! bless my heart alive, I do believe he's thinking of getting married. Was there ever such a set-out? There won't be one of us left at this rate. First a death, then a marriage! Upon my soul, I hardly know which is the worst of the two. As for the Hunt, it's going to the dogs altogether; and if Lord Littelbrane don't look out, he'll be having his country over-run with strangers, and a lot of confounded radicals who not only believe in but *act* on the principle of one man being as good as another. Such rot indeed!" he wound up indignantly.

His heart was so heavy within him at the mere thought of Lord Littelbrane's contemplating matrimony, that when he got home he found the cold beef insufficient to comfort the sinkings of his inner man. He was forced to take a very stiff tumbler of brandy and water in addition.

"Just to quiet the system, Mary, my dear; just to quiet the system," he explained to his pretty parlour-maid (he never would have an ugly servant in his house), chucking her familiarly under the chin.

"Hexactly, sir ; I understands."

"The fact of the matter is, Mary, I've received a shock, and it has knocked me all of a heap."

"Take another glass of brandy, sir. It's uncommon soothing to the nerves."

"Yes, Mary, I will. I think your suggestion is a wise one."

He found it so wise that it was close upon one o'clock before he could at length be induced to toddle off to his bed. Mary had to help him to get there ; but once safely between the sheets, thanks to the joint effect of Lord Littelbrane's port and of his own three-star Henessey, he slept the sleep of the just.

He had effectually soothed his nerves by addling his wits.

(To be continued.)

JOHN RUSKIN.

By JOSEPH FORSTER.

PART I.

JOHN RUSKIN is the son of a London merchant, and was born in the year 1819. He thus writes of himself: "Who am I, that I should challenge you," the squires of England, "do you ask? My mother was a sailor's daughter, and, please you, one of my aunts was a baker's wife—the other a tanner's, and I don't know much more about my family, except that there used to be a greengrocer of the name in a small shop near the Crystal Palace. Something of my early and vulgar life, if it interests you, I will tell in next 'Fors'; in this one it is indeed my business, poor gipsy herald as I am, to bring you such a challenge, though you should hunt and hang me for it."

Mr. Ruskin's father came over the border in search of fortune. "He came up to London, was a clerk in a merchant's office for nine years without a holiday, then began business on his own account, paid his father's debts, and married his exemplary Croydon cousin."

* * * * *

"My father began business as a wine merchant, with no capital, and a considerable amount of debts bequeathed him by my grandfather. He accepted the bequest, and paid them all before he began to lay by anything for himself, for which his best friends called him a fool; and I, without expressing anything as to his wisdom, which I knew in such matters to be at least equal to mine, have written on the granite slab over his grave that he was 'an entirely honest merchant.' As days went on, he was able to take a house in Hunter Street, Brunswick Square, No. 54 (the windows of it, fortunately for me, commanded a view of a marvellous iron post, out of which the water-carts were filled through beautiful little trap-door pipes like boa-constrictors, and I was never weary of contemplating that mystery, and the delicious dripping consequent); and as years went on, he could command a post-chaise and pair for two months in the summer, by help of which, with my mother and me, he went the round of his country customers (who liked to see the principal of the house his own traveller); so that at a jog-trot pace, and through the panoramic opening of the four windows of a post-chaise, made more panoramic still to me because my seat was a little bracket

in front, I saw all the high-roads and most of the cross ones of England, Wales, and a great part of lowland Scotland, as far as Perth, where every other year we spent the whole summer."

This is how the boy learnt to love art, which, as he so finely said, "is a translation of nature." "It happened also, what was the real cause of the bias of my after life, that my father had a rare love of pictures. I use the word advisedly, having never met with another instance of so innate a faculty for the discernment of true art up to the point possible without actual practice. Accordingly, wherever there was a gallery to be seen, we stopped at the nearest town for the night; and in reverentest manner I thus saw nearly all the noblemen's houses in England, not, indeed, myself at that age caring for pictures, but much for castles and ruins, feeling more and more, as I grew older, the healthy delight of uncovetous admiration, and perceiving, as soon as I could perceive any political truth at all, that it was probably much happier to live in a small house and have Warwick Castle to be astonished at; but that, at all events, it would not make Brunswick Square in the least more pleasantly habitable to pull Warwick Castle down. And to this day, though I have kind invitations enough to visit America, I could not, even for a couple of months, live in a country so miserable as to possess no castles."

From Hunter Street Mr. Ruskin's father removed to Herne Hill, and from there to a larger house at Denmark Hill.

Before I deal with the great and original teachings of John Ruskin, I think I ought to give a slight sketch of his life. He was born in London in 1819, and educated at Christ Church, Oxford, where he gained the Newdigate prize for poetry ("Salsette and Elephantia") in 1839. When a youth he studied under Copley Fielding and Harding, and soon became enamoured of Turner's glorious works, then but little appreciated.

Turner's splendid "Antwerp" was first sold for £300. It sold the other day at 6,500 guineas. Ruskin's advocacy of the claims of Turner to the admiration of the world began by a letter he wrote in his defence to *Blackwood's Magazine*. This developed into the first volume of "Modern Painters," which was a great success, and was also bitterly attacked. He resided some time in Italy, and published the remaining volumes of "Modern Painters," between 1846 and 1860. He had previously written the "Seven Lamps of Architecture" (1849), and the "Stones of Venice" (1851 and 1853). He was appointed Rede Lecturer at Cambridge (1867), and Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford (1872), but he retired from this position in 1878 in consequence of illness. He again accepted the chair in 1883, and finally vacated it in 1885, owing to the action of the University on the question of vivisection. Besides publishing a great many miscellaneous works, including "Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds," which a simple-minded farmer bought for practical instruction on the subject, and was

very disappointed and bewildered by its contents, he gave to the world "Political Economy in Art," "Two Paths," "Unto this Last," "Sesame and Lilies," "Ethics of the Dust," "Queen of the Air," "Crown of Wild Olive," and "Ariadne Florentina." In 1871 he commenced his priceless series of letters entitled "Fors Clavigera," which he explained meant "Deed, Patience, and Love."

These beautiful letters deal in a strikingly original and exquisitely beautiful way with nearly every subject interesting to people of thought, culture and refinement. This publication, consisting of ninety-six numbers, was finally closed in December, 1884. Mr. Ruskin is now engaged on his autobiography, to the publication of which the civilized world looks forward with eager interest.

I will now endeavour to deal with some of the salient characteristics of Mr. Ruskin's teaching. To understand Ruskin it is, I think, necessary to understand Wordsworth. The same loving study and reverent worship of nature animated both writers. Ruskin is simply saturated with Wordsworth. The difference between them is one of temper. One was calm, philosophical, withdrawn from the cantankerous controversies of politics and the little details of daily life. John Ruskin, with a chivalrous disregard of the wear and tear consequent upon mingling in the dusty daily fray, breaks out here with a letter, and there with a lecture dealing directly with the topic of the hour. He is constantly tapped by the foolishest people. There is, I must admit, a decided note of femininity in his genius; a want of manly strength and repose; a quality in which Wordsworth was nearly as great as Goethe. The voice is piercing sweet, but it is a falsetto now and then; a head and not a chest voice; and reminds me occasionally of the unnatural *soprani* of Handel's time. Mr. Ruskin appears to me now and then to lose his balance, his common sense. I do not consider that he is a safe teacher to ordinary men and women; but to those who can weigh, measure and discriminate between his opinions, and as a noble and chivalrous denouncer of the infinite vulgarity and stupid greed of the age, his teachings are of unspeakable value.

The following passage from Wordsworth's "Excursion" will, I hope, support my opinion of the similarity of Ruskin's teaching to that of Wordsworth:

"How beautiful this dome of sky;
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed
At thy command, how awful! Shall the Soul,
Human and rational, report of thee
Even less than these?—Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice:
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget thee here; where thou hast built,
For thy own glory, in the wilderness!

Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,
 In such a temple as we now behold
 Reared for thy presence : therefore, am I bound
 To worship, here, and everywhere—as one
 Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,
 From childhood up, the ways of poverty ;
 From unreflecting ignorance preserved,
 And from debasement rescued.—By thy grace
 The particle divine remained unquenched ;
 And, 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,
 Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,
 From paradise transplanted : wintry age
 Impends ; the frost will gather round my heart ;
 If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead !
 —Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires
 Perpetual Sabbath ; come, disease and want ;
 And sad exclusion through decay of sense ;
 But leave me unabated trust in thee—
 And let thy favor, to the end of life,
 Inspire me with ability to seek
 Repose and hope among eternal things—
 Father of heaven and earth ! and I am rich,
 And will possess my portion in content ! ”

The sublime spirit pervading the above lines, worthy of Milton himself, shines through all John Ruskin's best work.

A little further on the same great poet, scorning self, sings :

“ But, above all, the victory is most sure
 For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
 To yield entire submission to the law
 Of conscience—conscience revered and obeyed,
 As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
 And his most perfect image in the world.
 Endeavour thus to live ; these rules regard ;
 These helps solicit ; and a steadfast seat
 Shall then be yours among the happy few
 Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air,
 Sons of the morning.”

John Ruskin has breathed “ empyreal air.” He is, if ever man was, a “ son of the morning.”

A great deal has been said and written about Pre-Raphaelitism, with its manly scorn of conventional cant and shallow pretence in art. Millais, Rossetti, Holman Hunt and Burne Jones put their original and daring ideas in glowing colours before the jaded public, and John Ruskin, in words not less glowing and opalescent, fought their battle as he only can fight.

This band of earnest and devoted men of genius led a revolt against the tea-trays gone wrong of the Royal Academy. They believed that “ the open secret of nature ” must be studied on the spot ; that an artist was not a man who slavishly imitated the method of some successful painter ; but one who with devoted love pursued the glow, the glitter, or the sad solemnity of nature with a never-failing energy and perseverance. According to a man's insight into nature and his power to make us feel by his picture what he felt when he looked at and loved the scene por-

trayed, is the value of his genius. That is not done by making a worse copy of a bad picture, painted as Doré used to paint from drawings and a fertile imagination.

Reynolds told his pupils to generalize, and not to degrade art by details. But, thank heaven, his practice contradicted his teachings, and in spite of a vicious theory, his pictures proved him a great genius, drawing his inspiration from the bottomless well of nature. This is Mr. Ruskin's own definition of Pre-Raphaelitism :

"Pre-Raphaelitism has but one principle, that of absolute uncompromising truth in all that it does, obtained by working everything, down to the most minute detail, from nature, and from nature only ; or, where imagination is necessarily trusted to, always endeavouring to conceive a fact as it really was likely to have happened. Every Pre-Raphaelite landscape background is painted, to the last touch, in the open air, from the thing itself. Every Pre-Raphaelite figure, however studied in expression, is a true portrait of some living person. Every minute accessory is painted in the same manner. This is the main Pre-Raphaelite principle."

I don't think any one can doubt that the influence of this teaching has been good. It brought the artist back to the direct study of the all-mother, Nature ; and that is always good and wholesome.

"But art is not nature, or it would not be art." And those of us who have seen some of the best pictures of the school, painted with all the glow of youthful enthusiasm, must admit that many of them were hard and unpleasing. Art must please first, I think, and refine and elevate the mind and heart too. A man may think he has a mission to teach ; but he must also prove, if he wishes to be regarded by a busy world, that he can teach in a pleasing, graceful way. Mere scolding at large will not do. That leads me to the exquisite beauty, finish, and grace of John Ruskin's literary style. One would, I think, rather read the melodious scoldings of Ruskin than the praise of most other writers. His very faults are better than their puny literary virtues.

I will now venture to quote a few passages from this great writer and teacher. In speaking of Reynolds, Ruskin writes : "Sir Joshua Reynolds threw himself at the feet of the great masters of Italy, and arose to share their throne." "He had a strong, unaided, unerring instinct for all that was true, pure, and noble."

In speaking of Turner's "Slave Ship," he wrote : "Its daring conception, ideal in the highest sense of the word, is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life. The whole picture is dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable sea."

Again, he writes : "Fine Art is that in which the hand, the

head, and the heart go together. Greatness of art consists, first, in earnest and intense seizing of natural facts; then the ordering these facts by strength of human intellect, so as to make them, for all who look upon them, to the utmost serviceable, memorable and beautiful. And thus great art is nothing else than the type of strong and noble life, for, as the ignoble person in the dealing with all that occurs in the world about him, sees nothing clearly—looks nothing firmly in the face, and then allows himself to be swept away by the torrent and inexorable force of the things that he would not foresee, and could not understand; so the noble person, looking the facts of the world full in the face, and fathoming them with deep faculty, then deals with them, in unalarmed intelligence and unhurried strength, and becomes, with his human intellect and will, no unconscious nor insignificant agent in communicating their good, and restraining their evil.”

“Homer sang what he saw; Phidias carved what he saw; Raphael painted the men and women in their own caps and mantles; and every man who has arisen to eminence in modern times has done so by working in their way and doing the things he saw. Base Academy teaching, in spite of which these men have risen, I say in spite of the entire method and aim of our art teaching. It destroys the greater number; it hinders and paralyzes the greatest.”

PART II.

“MAN’S use and function are to be the witness of the glory of God, and to advance that glory by his reasonable obedience and resultant happiness. Better not to live than that we should disappoint the purpose of existence.”

The following passage is very characteristic of Mr. Ruskin: “Many people appear to believe that homes and lands, and food and raiment were alone useful, and as if sight, thought, and admiration were all profitless. Men who think, as far as such men can think, that the meat is more than the life, and the raiment than the body, who look to the world as a stable, and to its fruit as fodder; vine dressers and husbandmen, who love the corn they grind, and the grapes they crush, better than the gardens of the angels upon the slopes of Eden; hewers of wood and drawers of water, who think that it is to give them wood to hew and water to draw, that the pine forests cover the mountains like the shadow of God, and the great rivers move like His Eternity. . . . The Nebuchadnezzar curse, that sends men to grass like oxen, seems to follow too closely on the excess or continuance of national power and peace.”

* * * * *

“When the honour of God is thought to consist in the poverty

of His temple; when we ravage without a pause of remorse all the loveliness of creation which God in giving pronounced Good: there is need, bitter need, to bring back to men's minds, that to live is nothing, unless to live be to know Him by whom we live, and that He is not to be known by marring His fair works, and blotting out the evidence of His influences upon His creations; not amidst the hurry of crowds and crash of innovation, but in solitary places, and out of the glowing intelligences which He gave to men of old."

And, may I add? to such men as John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, and Emerson of our own day.

* * * *

"The true sign of good breeding is sympathy; a vulgar man is kind in a hard way on principle; whereas a highly-bred man, even when cruel, will be cruel in a softer way, understanding and feeling what he inflicts, and pitying his victim."

* * * *

"Impossible to be open, except to men of his own kind. To them he can open himself, by a word or glance; but to men not of his own kind he cannot open himself though he tried it through an eternity of clear grammatical speech. By the very acuteness of his sympathy he knows how much he can give to anybody, and he gives that frankly."

* * * *

"We have among mankind in general the three orders of beings: the lowest, sordid and selfish, which neither sees nor feels; the second, noble and sympathetic, but which sees and feels without concluding or acting; the third and highest, which loses sight in resolution, and feeling in work. For one who is blinded to the works of God by profound abstraction or lofty purpose, tens of thousands have their eyes sealed by vulgar selfishness, and their intelligence crushed by impious care."

The following passage is exquisitely beautiful and true: "A man of genius remains in great part a child, seeing with the large eyes of children, in perpetual wonder, not conscious of much knowledge—conscious, rather, of infinite ignorance, and yet infinite power; a fountain of eternal admiration, delight, and creative force within him meeting the ocean of visible and governable things around him."

What a thrill of love pervades and pulses through this: "All things are literally better, lovelier, and more beloved for the imperfections which have been divinely appointed, that the law of human life may be Effort, and the law of human judgment—Mercy."

* * * *

"Justice, mercy, and truth, and no mention of any doctrinal

point whatsoever occurring in either piece of Divine teaching, viz., Book of Job and the Sermon on the Mount."

The following powerful passage is well worthy of deep consideration in this noisy day of rant and cant: "It is not accident, it is not Heaven-commanded calamity, it is not the original and inevitable evil of man's nature, which fill your streets with lamentation, and your graves with prey. It is only that, when there should have been labour, there has been lasciviousness; and wilfulness, when there should have been subordination."

To return to art, Mr. Ruskin, in a magnificent passage, writes: "The gifts which distinctly mark the artist—without which he must be feeble in life, forgotten in death—with which he may become one of the shakers of the earth and one of the signal-lights of heaven, are those of sympathy and imagination."

"Greatness is not a teachable nor gainable thing, but the expression of the mind of a God-made great man; teach, or preach, or labour as you will, everlasting difference is set between one man's capacity and another's; and the God-given supremacy is the priceless thing, always just as rare in the world at one time as another."

"I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility, doubt of his power, or hesitation in speaking his opinions; but a right understanding of the relation between what he can do or say, and the rest of the world's sayings and doings. All great men not only know their own business, but usually that they know it, and are not only right in their main opinions, but they usually know that they are right in them; only they do not think much of themselves on that account. Arnolfo knows that he can build a good dome at Florence."

"Albert Durer writes calmly to one who had found fault with his work: 'It cannot be better done;' Sir Isaac Newton knows that he has worked out a problem or two that would have puzzled anybody else; only they do not expect their fellow-men therefore to fall down and worship them; they have a curious under-sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them; they could not do or be anything else than God made them. And they see something divine and God-made in every other man they meet, and are endlessly, foolishly, incredibly merciful."

Mr. Ruskin, in the following passage, divides men into three ranks and four classes:—"Three ranks: 1st, the man who perceives rightly because he does not feel. 2nd, the man who perceives wrongly, because he feels. And then, lastly, there is the man who perceives rightly in spite of his feeling. There are four classes: the men who feel nothing and therefore see truly; the men who feel strongly, think weakly, and see untruly (2nd order of poets); and the men who feel strongly, think strongly, and see truly (1st

order of poets); and the men who, strong as human creatures can be, are yet submitted to influences stronger than they, and see in a sort untruly, because what they see is inconceivably above them. This last is the usual condition of prophetic inspiration."

The following passage on women and their influence occurs in Mr. Ruskin's lecture on *Classic and Gothic Art*, delivered at Oxford: "Although in an ideal state of society the women will be the guiding and purifying power, in savage and undeveloped countries they are openly oppressed as beasts of burden, in corrupted and fallen countries more secretly and terribly. There is a surplus of women, an apparent glut of them, but of the useful women, the best kind of women, the supply, small to begin with, is diminished by death and misguidance. The experience of most thoughtful persons will confirm me in saying that extremely good girls usually die young. Little Nells and May Queens fly from the smoke and stir of this dim spot which men call earth to the regions mild of calm and serene air. Most persons of affectionate temper have lost their own May Queens or Little Nells in their time, and I could count the like among my best-loved friends with a rosary of tears. A country paying this enforced tax of its good girls annually to heaven, ought at least to take great care of those it has left. Passing by those who go into convents, or become sick nurses and do much good, there is a kind of girl just as good, but with a less strong will, who is more or less spoilable and mismanageable; and these are almost sure to come to grief by the faults of others or merely by the general fortunes and chances of the world." Mr. Ruskin tells, in his own exquisite way, a pathetic story of a sea captain's daughter: "the most beautiful girl of the pure English Greek type, finely-pencilled dark brows, rather dark hair, and bright pure colour, who, after refusing many lovers, fell in love with a youth whom, with foolish pride, she treated worse than all the others, so that he lost hope, and soon after died. After his death she realized the depth and value of the love she had lost, and never recovered from the blow. She wandered about sadly and listlessly for some years and then died of a rapid decline."

Mr. Ruskin's opinions on love are as original and daring as his views on other subjects. In his opinion a father is a girl's proper confidant rather than her mother. "What she is not inclined to tell her father should be told to no one, and in nine cases out of ten not thought of by herself. I believe that few fathers, however wrong-headed or hard-hearted, would fail of answering the habitual and patient confidence of their child with true care for her." Then, Mr. Ruskin, in his emphatic manner, lays down the following ideal law of courtship, which, I venture to believe, is as little likely to be followed as his suggestion that a girl should confide in her father in preference to her mother.

"When a youth is fully in love with a 'girl, and feels that he is

wise in loving her, he should at once tell her so plainly and take his chance bravely with other suitors. No lover should have the insolence to think of being accepted at once, nor should any girl have the cruelty to refuse at once without severe reasons. If she simply doesn't like him she may send him away for seven years or so, he vowing to live on cresses and wear sack-cloth meanwhile, or the like penance; if she likes him a little, or thinks she might come to like him in time, she may let him stay near her, putting him always on sharp trial to see what stuff he is made of, and requiring figuratively as many lion-skins or giants' heads as she thinks herself worth. The whole meaning and power of true courtship is probation, and it ought not to be shorter than three years at least; seven is, to my mind, the orthodox time. And these relations between the young people should be openly and simply known, not to their friends only, but to everybody who has the least interest in them; and a girl worth anything ought always to have half-a-dozen or so suitors under love for her."

This is simply lovely in its pure Arcadian simplicity. It is like reading the almost divine "*Fairie Queen*" of Spenser. What Mr. Ruskin asks for belongs to that fairyland, a place somewhere between earth and heaven.

A little further on Mr. Ruskin attacks in his most trenchant way the vulgar "mob courtship" of to-day.

"There are no words strong enough to express the general danger and degradation of the manners of mob courtship, as distinct from these, which have become the fashion, almost the law, in modern times, when, in a miserable confusion of candle-light, moonlight, and lime-light—and anything but daylight—in indecently attractive and insanely expensive dresses, in snatched moments, in hidden corners, in accidental impulses and dismal ignorances, young people smirk and ogle and whisper and whimper and sneak and stumble and flutter and fumble and blunder into what they call love, expect to get whatever they like the moment they fancy it, and are continually in the danger of losing all the honour of life for a folly, and all the joy of it by an accident."

Mr. Ruskin speaks with pathetic power of "lost jewels," girls with "little power of ruling and every provocation of mis-ruling their fates, who have from their births much against them, few to help, and virtually none to guide them. If there be fire and genius in these neglected ones, and they chance to have beauty also, God save them and all of us! What do these bright reverses of their best human treasures not cost the economical British race or the cheerful French—this casting away of things precious, the profanation of things pure, the pain of things capable of happiness, to what sum incalculable do these amount to?"

Mr. Ruskin sadly ponders on these terrible facts as he looks down on "all the south and east of Lancashire and Yorkshire,

black with the fume of their fever-fretted cities, rolling itself along the dales and mixed with the torrent mists." ;

A few words on the St. George's Society, formed by Mr. Ruskin with the intention of grappling with some of the evils which he describes with unequalled eloquence and power.

I will again quote the great teacher on the aim of the society :
"The highest possible education of English men and women living by agriculture in their native land, I do not care where the land is nor of what quality. I would rather it should be poor, for I want space more than food. I will make the best of it that I can at once by wage labour, under the best agricultural advice. I should like a bit of marsh land of small value, which I would trench with alternate ridge and canal, changing it all into solid land, and deep water to be farmed in fish. If, instead, I got a rocky piece, I shall arrange reservoirs for rain, then put what earth is sprinkled on it into workable masses ; and ascertaining in either case how many mouths the gained spaces of ground will easily feed, put upon them families chosen for me by old landlords who know their people and can send me cheerful and honest ones, accustomed to obey orders and live in the fear of God. If any young couples of the higher classes choose to accept such rough life, I would rather have them for tenants than any others. Tenants, I say, and at long leases if they behave well, with power eventually to purchase the piece of land they live on for themselves, if they can save the price of it ; the rent they pay meanwhile being the tithe of the annual produce to St. George's Fund. The modes of cultivation of the land to be under the control of the overseer of the whole estate, appointed by the trustees of the fund ; but the tenants shall build their own houses to their own minds, under certain conditions as to materials and strength ; and have for themselves the entire produce of the land, except the tithe aforesaid. The children will be required to attend training schools for bodily exercise and music, with such education as I have already described. Every household will have its library given it from the fund, and consisting of a fixed number of volumes, some constant, the others chosen by each family out of a list of permitted books, from which they afterwards may increase the library if they choose. The formation of this library, for choice, by a republication of classical authors in standard forms, has long been a main object with me. No newspapers nor any books but those named in the annually renewed lists, are to be allowed in any household. In time I hope to get a journal published containing notice of any really important matters taking place in this or other countries, or the closely-sifted truth of them."

PART III.

I once heard Mr. Ruskin lecture at the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street. That must have been twenty-five years ago. Mr. Ruskin's manner as a lecturer was charming: so easy, so unaffected, and yet, every now and then, soaring easily upwards to a noble pitch of earnest eloquence. The lecture was on a British penny, which he compared to a Greek coin, pointing out, with fine wit and satire, the grovelling vulgarity of the one, and the exquisite purity of line and harmony of design in the other. He was very earnest on that occasion, and, I think, on every occasion, in pointing out to his hearers the terrible social dangers by which we are surrounded and may be overwhelmed.

In fact the lecture was full of deep feeling, the subtlest art criticism, and was illuminated now and again by fine caustic wit and masterly irony.

The following graphic sketch of Mr. Ruskin will, I am sure, be appreciated by my readers:

"Mr. Ruskin rises early, and writes for three hours before his guests are down. Breakfast over, he retires to his study to answer letters or complete some piece of unfinished work, or will go out on the hill, perhaps, and make a delicately finished study of rock and grass for the engraver's hand to copy.

"Between one and six o'clock, the tourist at the Lakes may see a slight figure dressed in a grey frock-coat, and wearing the bright blue tie so familiar to audiences at Oxford and elsewhere, walking about the quiet lanes, sitting down by the harbour's side, or rowing on the water. The back is somewhat bent, the light brown hair straight and long, the whiskers scarcely show signs of eight-and-fifty summers numbered, and the spectator need not be surprised at the determined energy with which a boat is brought to shore or pushed out into the lake.

"Sometimes a friend breaks in on this peaceful time, and is met with both hands outstretched, while the gentle look in the clear blue eyes and a few low-voiced words give him full assurance that he is entirely welcome. To such the place is gladly shown; and a walk is taken up the grass paths cut through the woods, with seats placed where the views are best, to look out over mountain and lake, and be taught, maybe, in the rich colours and fleecy clouds, the utter rightness of Turner; till, ascending higher, an admiring eye must be cast on a bit of rough ground, red with heather, which, lying just beyond the boundaries of Brantwood, is the professor's Naboth's Vineyard.

"Mr. Ruskin's sensitive nature is singularly affected by changes of weather, and a bright day makes him as joyful as a dull one makes him sad. But courtesy and kindness to those around him are characteristics he never loses; insincerity is a fault of

which he is thoroughly devoid; and those who know him best delight in an unaffected simplicity of manner, which in men of acknowledged genius is as valuable as it is often rare."

In this slight sketch of Mr. Ruskin, I have by a careful selection of quotations endeavoured to bring out clearly the light and shade of his character and genius. I shall conclude my article by two quotations, which, I think, for power, scope and elevation are unsurpassed and unsurpassable: they place Ruskin by the side of Carlyle and Emerson as one of the greatest and most stimulating teachers of the century.

"Whatever may be the inability in this present life to mingle the full enjoyment of the divine works with the full discharge of every practical duty, and confessedly in many cases this must be, let us not attribute the inconsistency to any indigency of the faculty of contemplation, but to the sin and suffering of the fallen state, and the change of order from the keeping of the garden to the tilling of the ground. We cannot say how far it is right or agreeable with God's will, while men are perishing round about us; while grief, and pain, and wrath, and impiety, and death, and all the powers of the air are working wildly and evermore, and the cry of blood going up to heaven, that any of us should take hand from the plough; but this we know, that there will come a time when the service of God shall be the beholding of Him; and though in these stormy seas, where we are now driven up and down, His spirit is dimly seen on the face of the waters, and we are left to cast anchors out of the stern and wish for the day—that day will come—when, with the evangelists on the crystal and stable sea, all the creatures of God shall be full of eyes within, and there shall be 'no more curse, but His servants shall serve Him and shall see His face.'"

The following sublime passage which, I think, sums up all the beauty, intellectual and moral, contained in all Mr. Ruskin's works, shall terminate my article:

"Here is a short piece of precious word revelation, for instance, 'God is love.' Love! yes. But what is that? The revelation does not tell you that, I think. Look into the mirror and you will see. Out of your own heart you may know what love is. In no other possible way, by no other help or sign. All the words and sounds ever uttered, all the revelations of cloud, or flame, or crystal, are utterly powerless. They cannot tell you, in the smallest point, what love means. Only the broken mirror (the soul) can. Here is more revelation. God is just. Just! What is that? The revelation cannot help you to discover. You say it is dealing equitably or equally. But how do you discover the equality? Not by inequality of mind, not by a mind incapable of weighing, judging, or distributing. If the lengths seem unequal in the broken mirror, for you they are unequal; but 'they seem equal, then the mirror is true. So far as you recog-

nize equality, and your conscience tells you what is just, so far your mind is the image of God's; and so far as you do not discern the nature of justice or equality, the words, 'God is just,' bring no revelation to you.

"But His thoughts are not as our thoughts. No; the sea is not a standing pool by the wayside. Yet when the breeze crisps the pool you may see the image of the breakers and a likeness of the foam. Nay, in some sort, the same foam. If the sea is for ever invisible to you, something you may learn from the pool. Nothing assuredly, any otherwise. But this poor miserable Me! Is this, then, all the book I have got to read God in? Yes! truly so. No other book, or fragment of a book, than that will you ever find. No velvet-bound missal, nor frankincensed manuscript; nothing hieroglyphic nor cuniform; papyrus and pyramid are alike silent on this matter; nothing in the clouds above or the earth beneath. That flesh-bound volume is the only revelation that is, that was, or that can be. In that is the image of God painted; in that is the law of God written; in that is the promise of God revealed. Know thyself; for through thyself only canst thou know God. In the glass darkly. But except through the glass, in no wise.

"A tremulous crystal, waved in water, poured out upon the ground; you may defile it, despise it, pollute it, at your pleasure and at your peril; for on the peace of those weak waves must all the heaven you shall ever gain be first seen; and through such purity as you can insure for those dark waves, must all the light of the risen sun of righteousness be bent down by faint refraction. Cleanse them and calm them as you love your life.

"Therefore is it that all the power of nature depends in subjection to the human soul. Man is the sun of the world; more than the real sun. The fire of his wonderful heart is the only light and heat worth gauge and measure.

"Where he is, is the tropics. Where he is not, the ice world."

"Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears.
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years."

"Sink in thyself; there ask what ails thee, at that shrine."

UNFORGIVEN.

By MARY DEANE,

AUTHOR OF "QUATREFOIL," "ST. BRIAVELS," ETC.

I MUST try to remember the beginning of the story I have to tell—the most strange, incomprehensible, and I may add, sad experience of my life. But it has nothing to do with my personal history; I have been merely a looker-on, while things beyond all understanding have passed before me.

To fix the point from which a tale has been gradually drawn out is not easy, but in my own mind I go back for the earliest dawn of poor Agatha Broome's tragedy to one autumn evening at Brighton years ago.

I had been enjoying a superb sunset on the cliff when she came suddenly up to me. My husband met me afterwards, and I remember saying, "The Broomes are here. Agatha saw me, and jumped out of the carriage. I never knew her so bright; but you know I always think her an odd, volcanic girl."

Of course Tom smiled incredulously, and said he had never found anything in the least unusual about the girl, who was some sort of cousin of his. "She was not original, not in the least clever—only a sweet-tempered, helpless young female, who would be a great drag upon a poor man if she happened to make a bad match."

"The sweet temper," I observed, "is a fact, yet it is delusive; it is the vintage upon the quiescent crater. Look at her colouring."

"Well, it is a bit of the red chestnut," Tom replied, assentingly.

"We shall see; I think she is in love," I remarked.

He was interested, and wished to know the name of the favoured man, but I could not tell him that, neither could I give distinct reasons for my sudden conviction.

The following day was very wet and stormy. I had not thought of going out, neither did I expect any visitors; nevertheless, just as it was growing dusk in came Agatha Broome, her very tall, slight figure wrapped in furs, her cheeks aglow, her bright hair ruffled by the wind.

She was a very thin, lithe creature, but had she grown stout as years went on she would have been a big, imposing woman, for her bones were not small. She had a round face, full lips, red brown eyes, and an anti-classical nose. She was not in the least

beautiful; even her rich, abundant wavy hair was too vividly red to be the right thing. I had always found her pleasant, believed in there being much good in her, and would have trusted her. No small praise, I think.

Whether she meant to confess or not I do not know, but in the fire-light, with the rain and the wind beating outside, she became sentimental in her talk, and then in slipped a name I knew well—Captain Haringfield.

So far as I had heard of this young man, he was a good choice for her to have made, and from what she said he seemed to be as wildly in love with her, as I easily discovered her to be with him. Their acquaintance had been a short one, but in my experience it does not take so long to run up a love drama in real life as it took Coleridge to write "*Christabel*."

Tom thought I was wonderfully clever to have found out that Agatha was in love in the space of twenty minutes, before she had told me a word about it; he was also glad to hear that Captain Haringfield was the man. She had not bound me over not to tell, and I appeal to any married woman, whether the temptation to do so was not too great to be resisted.

Agatha was wild to get back to town, and I had no difficulty in guessing her reason; but one Sunday Captain Haringfield turned up at Brighton with some friends, and she had an hour's walk with him on the cliff—an hour of rapture, though I made a third in the party. I could not leave her to walk alone with him. She was a silent girl, and spoke less than usual on this occasion, but he was a good talker, although self-conscious, for which I forgave him, hoping that it was the result of his feelings with regard to Agatha, who positively looked handsome, with a luminous sort of brilliancy that I had never seen before.

Tom has to listen to all my views upon men and women, and I enlarged upon Captain Haringfield when we were alone. He was what many people call a very handsome man. I did not, but for obvious reasons, forbear to describe him. Agatha would not have looked at Apollo or Antinous by his side. With all this, he was a man of intellect, and belonged to the scientific soldier class of to-day. However, in my experience of him he was poetic, sentimental, and melancholy, and I wondered if he imagined himself understood by Agatha, who had not a grain of intellect.

Further acquaintance explained the matter. He was a very vain man, and the incense of flattery intoxicated him. No flattery can be so unbounded and so flattering as the adoring belief of a woman desperately in love.

He did not go back to town with his friends, the fascination of Agatha's company was too attractive to him. A running fire of telegrams was kept up, and he stopped on to the very last hour possible. Agatha walked secure in the seventh heavens. Her father was a rich, money-loving man; his particular position is no

matter. Captain Haringfield had to make his way, and most probably go abroad. Here, therefore, I foresaw difficulties in the way of the couple, and I was not surprised that Captain Haringfield had left without making Agatha an offer of that cut and dried description which law would regard as a binding thing.

"Love in growth the fond deceit, whereby men the perfect greet."

Agatha intoxicated herself with this drug, taken in its strongest form, for the period of Captain Haringfield's stay. Her indolent mother, whom moreover I always suspected of a mild bee in her bonnet, had not the least idea how many sunset and moonlight strolls the two took together. Whenever I came home from a friend's house just in time for dinner I saw them somewhere, or Tom stumbled across them as he took his after-dinner cigar. I can only describe Agatha's condition, when her lover had departed, as one of collapse. For sleep and food she substituted dreams of him. She grew thin in a few days, she became monosyllabic to the last degree except when speaking of him, and she came to me at all hours in order to pour out her heart. Tom remarked that she had "taken it very badly," and we both felt sorry for the girl. She haunted the house door at post time, falling upon the letter that arrived after a few days like a starving animal upon a morsel of food, and nearly fainting with disappointment when the post passed empty of what she craved after.

Tom was a little bit gloomy about it. His opinion was that if Captain Haringfield meant it, he would have declared himself before he left, but I should have thought so badly of the man if I had disbelieved in the truth of his attachment that I took quite another view. I was sure that he was in love; I was sure he was a man of at least ordinary honour.

Agatha returned to town, but Captain Haringfield was with his battalion of the Royal Engineers—not in London.

Shortly after we also went back, and Agatha called.

Some casual visitor was with me, and I felt rather than saw Agatha's impatience to get rid of her. The door was scarcely closed upon her retreat when the girl rose and came close to the fire and nearer to me, tossing as she did so a letter into my lap. "Read it, Rachel," she said with a passionate shake in her voice. "What do you think, what does it mean? He said he was coming back next week, and now—now—you see—he is going shooting."

"Of course he said he was coming back before he got the invitation," I answered, with genuine wonder (for I had been married some years) that she should not take it for granted that a man would jump at any chance of sport.

"He might have come if it was only for a day—a few hours."

"Oh, my dear, it seems to me you are a little bit unreasonable." But as I spoke I saw the rising of that little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, that comes before the deluge. What would bring

the deluge I did not know, probably her own jealous exacting temper. I gave my opinion at large upon the matter. Such discourse is like nothing but trying to compose a good anagram out of impossible letters. I was frightened for the girl when I saw that the mere fact that her lover having put off coming was an earthquake shock to her whole nature.

"You may be sure he will come, and you really must not grudge him his shooting," I said at last.

"Two months ago, he would not have gone—so," she muttered, "but he is such a good shot—of course they want him. Perhaps he will only stop a few days."

"It is sure not to be a few months at any rate," I said consolingly.

I sent her away finally a little cheered and more composed.

I told Tom that there was something more than an understanding between the two, it amounted to a private engagement, I thought; and yet, perhaps, not quite that.

"If Agatha isn't a fool she'll drop the man," Tom said. He was at times sententious, and then I knew that argument was thrown away upon him. In fact I must own that these laconic utterances of Tom's had got to have great weight with me, but I knew that Agatha would cling to her love even in wreck, rather than escape to the land of common sense in the life-boat of reason.

I mused sadly upon the wrecks of that description strewn along the shores of life, and upon the unnatural fact that "man's fate and woman's are contending powers." When would break the dawn of that self-command and sense of responsibility that alone could secure either sex from the cruelty of the other?

It was the end of January before Captain Haringfield came to town. Agatha's appearance and nerves had both suffered by that time, that is to say, the brilliancy of her first youth was dimmed; but in my eyes her face had gained by additional expression.

The passive expression—there was no active expression but a rare smile—had been almost sullen, it was now sad-expectant, and her complexion far more transparent than it had been.

It was partly my native philanthropy, and partly a burning desire to see what would come of it, that made me invite Captain Haringfield to dinner as soon as I heard of his arrival.

Agatha was the first to appear of my eight guests. Her dress, poor child, was a little bit too sumptuous for the occasion, but quite a picture to look at. She was fond of heavy rich materials, and they suited her.

Tom declared it was enough to frighten a man who had not ten thousand a year, but that went for nothing, because it might have been tulle with masses of real lace, and he, in his dark ignorance, would have thought it simple and inexpensive. She was nervous to the tips of her restless fingers, and bit her scarlet lips to keep them from trembling.

Captain Haringfield was the very last of the arrivals, and I had barely time, as I handed Agatha over to him to take down to dinner, to make mental notes upon his behaviour. However, I saw a flash of pleasure in his eyes and reflex joy in Agatha's, so I left them with my blessing and inward satisfaction.

I am sure that Agatha's dinner consisted of two spoonfuls of soup and a nibble of iced pudding, yet all her colour came back, and her eyes gave out light. Her companion had a great deal to say to her, and when she wished me good-night her squeeze of my hand told much.

"Well," said Tom a day or two after, "are they engaged yet?"

"Not yet," I answered; "but it must be soon."

"Oh," commented Tom, "Agatha is a fool if she don't drop that man."

I really felt quite disturbed.

I must get on with the story. It is impossible that I should record all the ups and downs, the hopes, the fears, the wild excitements, the long-drawn anguish of suspense through which I followed Agatha, growing ever more down-hearted as the strength of her passion, the weakness of her will, were revealed to me.

There was something terrible, I thought, something repulsive in a woman giving this unmeasured love to a man. Here Tom did not agree with me, he suggested that women were just as much human beings as men. I considered this, and felt there was something in it. All the same, there are morbid exhibitions of emotion in man and woman which are not the outcome of sound natures. One day I asked Agatha if she considered herself engaged to Captain Haringfield. This was when he had been absent on duty for full two months, now and then writing to her.

"Before heaven, I am," she exclaimed wildly. "He is just the same, but he knows papa's fancies, and he fears he may be ordered to some bad climate. How horrible if he should be sent on active service. I should die if he went to Africa."

"Don't talk nonsense, Agatha. You are just at the mercy of your nerves now because you eat nothing," was my grossly practical answer. But I knew that the body must infallibly knock under when the mysterious lord of it, the mind, is racked and overstrained.

"Do men know how women can suffer?" I asked Tom.

"No, nor women know how men suffer," he replied gruffly. Then after a pause he resumed: "There's only one thing for it, we will go abroad anywhere you please, and take Agatha with us." This was extremely kind of him, but unhappily Agatha refused to go.

She had had few letters from Captain Haringfield during his last absence, and the last of them announced that he was going yachting with a friend.

Of course, I never saw Agatha's letters to him. I often

wondered what they could be. They could not have been clever or amusing; they must have been passionate in some way, perhaps the way of temper. I hoped this rather than devotion. But I know now that the poor girl cast herself pitifully at his feet afterwards—too late—ah, too late for both. He had after all a heart, and though it seems to me horrible that a woman should not have her sackcloth of pride to wrap herself in when necessary, he would have been touched in conscience and feelings—but it was too late.

Quite accidentally I heard that a girl I had known and loved as a small child, Calista Winsley, was also yachting with those friends of his, and in a flash of intuition, proceeding very likely from my recollection of that most charming and clever child, my heart sank and bled for poor Agatha.

She heard nothing of a young lady on board until one day there was an account in the papers of a frightful storm in which this yacht had gone through several hours of extreme peril, but at length had happily gained one of the southern ports damaged, but in safety.

Agatha read this panting and deadly white. Suddenly she looked me in the face, with a white set look painful to witness.

“Who is Miss Winsley?” she asked.

I told her briefly, and she said no more. This was the first time Agatha had shown any reticence, and it was a bad sign. It was the first sowing of the seed, jealousy, in the hot soil of her heart.

What had happened I never knew till long after, but I must tell it here. Calista Winsley was not one of those surprising beauties who slay with a glance, but there was a charm in her face, voice and manner, that would remain a charm long after paint, powder and dye had been ineffectually resorted to by those beauties, in their hand to hand struggle with uncourteous old Time.

Pleased, attracted even at first sight, before many days of close companionship Captain Haringfield had gone far into the deeps of a very different sort of love from that inspired by poor Agatha.

Nothing might have come of it even then, but that that fatal storm revealed the two to one another, as moments of danger will do. I cannot blame the man very greatly. They really thought their last hour had come, and, as they were to die together, why not sweeten the bitter hour by the uplifting joy of acknowledging what they had become to one another. Such moments are not premeditated; heaven keep our sea walls sound, because no one knows when the hurricane is at hand! Miss Winsley's ignorance of his tie of honour had helped, of course, to undermine his bulwarks. He landed in England, then, bound in honour to one woman, and in heart and word to another, an uncomfortable

plight every one must acknowledge, even in this age of light regard for such matters.

He avoided coming to town all that season, and Agatha was dragged through the regulation round like a wild animal in leash.

The owner of that yacht, however, and his wife were in town, and from them a rumour came that Captain Haringfield was engaged to Miss Winsley. They thought it a pleasing romantic finish to the stirring episode of the storm.

As Agatha's whole interest lay in getting people to talk even in the remotest fashion about what concerned Captain Haringfield, and as she displayed a marvellous deal of what I may call cunning in this pursuit, the report of this engagement was not long in coming to her.

I never saw—I hope I may never see again—a creature so wildly distraught, so mad against suffering as she was, when she ran in to me, haggard and death-pale, to tell me, and to wrench from me an assurance that it could not be true.

She must have written a mad letter to him, for she wrote it at dead of night, in spite of my prayers, and posted it herself by day-break.

Somehow I blamed the man more for not answering it by return of post than for anything else he had done, for whereas the rest was the outcome of the weakness of human nature, this, to me who saw Agatha dying by inches in that suspense, seemed absolute cruelty. And yet no doubt it was the bitterest moment of a life above the average in freedom from stain, when Captain Haringfield finally wrote and dispatched a missive which left a brand upon his self-esteem for ever.

If only—if only—it had befallen one of the many girls who can turn from one man to another, if only she had been strong or shallow, or anything but what she was, a creature born to the sad inheritance of unbalanced passion, tainted blood, powerless brain!

She fainted dead away when she had read the letter, then she set her will to sullen purpose, put all the money she had into her purse, and, walking out of the house as though to pay a call near at hand, got into a cab, and had herself conveyed to Victoria Station. She actually found her way to the town in which Captain Haringfield was quartered, and sent from a hotel to desire him to come and see her there.

A telegram from him was the first thing I heard of it. He sent it in her name, "Come to me at once, I entreat."

It was the best thing he could have done under the circumstances, for it covered the fatal step she had taken. I sent Tom to her father, and took the next train from Victoria, arriving somewhere about midnight.

Captain Haringfield met me at the station in a distracted condition. He heaped anathemas upon his own head. He was no longer cynical or sentimental, but just a man overwhelmed with

remorse and self-reproach, with the horrible consciousness that he must do cruel wrong to one of two women, both of whom loved him devotedly, though after different fashions. It must take an extraordinary degree of vanity, I hope, to reconcile a man to such a situation.

It was beyond words; my lips were sealed. All I could say was to give it as my solemn opinion that by some means or other he must leave England.

When Agatha had ceased raving, she was more dead than alive. I took her home next day to my house, and her family never knew that she had been anywhere but there. Soon after, Tom and I took her abroad, and I shall never forget what we went through.

Captain Haringfield went to join our troops in South Africa. I did not expect Agatha to recover quickly, but I had seen such satisfactory recoveries—not but what scars are left behind for life generally, shewing in some new turn of disposition—that I was hopeful. I had no idea of the concentrative power of a nature like hers. She brooded day and night. The wound was as fresh at the end of six weeks as at the beginning. No change of scene, no society, made any difference. But she seemed to have learnt to live—at least so I thought until I took her back home. No, she had not learnt to live—her constitution was not one that could endure such a wrench. She became a ghastly spectacle of thinness and pallor. This lasted for two or three months when Captain Haringfield was sent home, invalided, and the next thing was, the news of his marriage with Calista Winsley in the papers. Really those utterly commonplace inventions, the daily papers, give me a creepy feeling approaching to awe when I take them up! I daresay it dates from that moment.

It was Agatha's death blow. Her illness was without a name, but "it was enough—it served."

She cared to have no one but me with her, so for the last ten days I never left her, and all her talk, amid her weakness, was of him. I could not help thinking that her story might have been made into a tragic poetic drama, for she was just what modern women in general are not, modern life does not admit of it. She was her love. Before she loved she was asleep, afterwards she had no life but in that concentrated form. Nothing distracted her, no mortal being besides the one was anything but a vision to her. She was the only instance I ever knew of entire singleness of aim. All else was swept into the whirlpool of passion, or existed not for her.

I believe I expected her to be tender when she was dying, but I was mistaken. There was no tenderness, not the slightest. She had been hideously, horribly, wronged and robbed, so it seemed to her.

Not that wonderfully vivid "Helen" of Rossetti's with her waxen image could have been more fixed and unrelenting towards her false lover.

"There is but one way in which I can be avenged," she gasped out in her failing voice. "He may think that because he has killed me he is safe from me, *but I will come back.*" Here the voice sank to a sort of low hiss, "Rachel, I will come back—I swear it—come back to wear his life out. That is why I am content to die."

Great heavens, how it chilled my blood to hear her! How the dusky light seemed to swell out into grey eternities upon whose vast wings spirits were afloat. It was not the word of a human being, it was a thrilling whisper from the other side of the grave. She was not wandering.

"Agatha, dear," I whispered as well as my tightening throat allowed; "at least, try to forgive him before you go. He has wronged you cruelly, but so much the more forgive."

She lifted herself on her pillow with more strength than she had shewn for at least a week. Her great hollow eyes turned upon me filled with sullen fire. With an effort she said distinctly:

"I cannot forgive cruelty like that. I cannot either in this world or the next; I will not. I pray I may never, never, never forgive him, so that to the last day of his life he may be punished. As he blighted and destroyed, so will I blight and destroy."

"Hush, hush, my poor child!"

"As he did so will I," she went on, regardless of my interruption. "As I suffered he shall suffer. God is just. I will come back."

Her head with all its weight of ruddy gold fell back, her eyelids closed darkly, her hollow cheeks looked more hollow—a moan—a gasp—and before any one else could come she lay dead in my arms. Shall I ever forget it!

Died for love. The idea perhaps is poetic, the reality is grim, miserable, an irony upon this life of ours. But wherein is the wrong, and how can it be put right? She died because she had a frail constitution, but she died of love. Other women live on, but the spring of life is broken in them.

Tom made one comment: "I should like to shoot the man," he said reflectively. However, nobody shot or otherwise molested Captain Haringfield, and a little while after I chanced to hear that he was extremely happy with his charming wife.

He was, moreover, fortunate enough to get a very good appointment in London. I met the couple soon after, found that Calista had a lively and affectionate remembrance of me, and was so touched by her old charm that I called—having resolved that I would not! In fact, it would have been a matter of some difficulty to avoid doing so, so Tom and I compromised matters by resolving never to accept an invitation of theirs, or to ask them except on formal occasions to our house. So the most poignantly felt griefs of "other people" are blown away by breezes of expediency, forgetfulness, or consideration for others.

Captain Haringfield had been a faithless lover, but he made a perfect husband. He and Calista were as much wrapped up in one another as two people have any right to be. They preferred one another's company to any other, which means a similarity in tastes, and congeniality of ideas that somehow is more often missed than found in marriage.

She was the sweetest of women; beautiful with the beauty that neither creates jealousy nor asks for admiration. She carried with her the golden charm of a warm, true nature, a happy disposition, a delicate care for others. She made one think that one would be very glad to have her nature.

I need scarcely observe that Major Haringfield—as he was now—was the kind of man to be greatly influenced by his wife. It is not a rarity in character, but I never knew any one so improved as he was by marriage. Doubtless the affair of Agatha had given his vanity such a knock on the head that it could never rear itself very obtrusively again, and so I watched with some reflections upon the waste in life, and saw what a perfect culminating blossom their love was becoming. Just what married love is intended to be.

I have now come to the extraordinary part of my story; I wonder how many people will believe it; some will I know.

It was very hot in London and the Haringfields resolved to run down to Brighton for a couple of days for a breath of sea air, also to see an old aunt whom they made a point of seeing now and then. Having nieces myself who I trust may take pleasure in visiting me when I am an old lady, I must here remark that I thought it a very pleasing trait in their characters. However, this was the beginning of it.

A splendid moonlight night tempted Major Haringfield to stroll out, leaving Calista to keep the old aunt company. That grand expanse of sea front never looks finer than under a brilliant moon. The tall houses wreathed and softly blotted by darkness, that might be palaces, the long drawn lines of lamps dotting shining beads as far as eye can reach, the mighty roar, or running whisper of the waves are all parts of its great attractiveness.

Major Haringfield selected a bench on the Hove esplanade nearest the sea, and sat there happily with his cigar.

But as he mused the power of association relentlessly working made him stand in spirit by a lonely grave in a far-away churchyard. The moon saw it, as it saw him, the wet dews lay upon it, the silence of night and of death were over it. Oh, not "to bring back," but to bury—to do away with some of those days that were past, when on this very spot he had done his best to rivet to him the heart of a woman, when he had eagerly drunk in the sweet draught of her strong love!

A heavy sigh broke from him. At this instant a light cold breeze passed over him, and also at the same instant he was aware

that some one was sitting on the same seat with him. A tall slight woman had quietly seated herself, and was gazing out to sea with her head turned away from him.

Half thinking he would move away, a natural feeling of curiosity arrested him. The woman did not wish to attract his notice, that was evident, she was neither bold nor a beggar, nor likely to offer him a tract. She sat perfectly still, wrapped in handsome garments. She was young by her figure, and the thick knot of hair that appeared under a quite girlish hat. That hair—yes, it was ruddy even in the moonlight, but not—no, not quite poor Agatha's red gold. He looked away. A man he knew passed by, lifted his hat, then glanced back at the other occupant of the bench.

She sat there motionless; her stillness began to trouble Major Haringfield, he could not resist his impulse to look again—to watch her. He did not know the exact moment when a dreadful impression stole upon him. That outline was so very familiar. When the figure slowly turned its face towards him he *knew* what he should see, and stared with cold drops upon his brow into the wasted face, the sunken blue eyes of Agatha Broome.

He bounded from the seat, his voice choked over a broken exclamation, and—he was alone.

"Are you not well, darling?" This was his wife's greeting to him.

"Oh, quite well—quite well," he had answered. But as he kissed her the subtle sympathy between them told her that all was not well. She wondered.

The next day they met the man who had passed by Major Haringfield on the cliff. "Ah, I saw you both last night," he began, in the voluble fashion of a man who makes a great deal out of a very little, "Yes, quite right, quite right; enjoying the moonlight, breathing in the sea air. I hope you did not catch cold, Mrs. Haringfield."

"I was not there; my husband took a moonlight stroll," replied Calista, smilingly.

"Oh, by the way—no, no. Of course I thought it was you, the face was in shadow; at least I mean the moon was shining full on Major Haringfield's face. That was all, you know. No, no. To be sure, my first impression, you know, stupid thing how one forgets. Charming morning. Going back to town soon? Good-bye."

Calista was much inclined to laugh, when a glance at her husband's face checked her. She had never seen him look angry, and she saw now an expression of bitter anger, and at the same time—what? Just what might be expected if he had suddenly been confronted with some sight terrible and dreadful in the extreme.

"What a fool the fellow is! I always thought him the greatest

fool I know!" exclaimed Haringfield. Then, trying to recover himself, he laughed awkwardly.

Calista was a wise woman. "If anything did occur that he does not mean to tell me it is because he cannot in honour for some reason," she said to herself. "Of course it might easily be."

They went home, and he soon became himself again.

As he could not leave London at present for more than a few days at a time they next went to Folkestone, and Calista found great amusement in sitting out on the Lees, watching the motley crowd and listening to the band.

"There is something a little bit weird in this crowd of people in the darkness," she said brightly. "You hear sentences floating at large on the air, and cannot trace them to the speakers. Only those gifted beings who collect money for the chairs and the band have the abnormal faculty of recognizing every one at a glance. They make no mistakes, and never overlook a new comer. Yes, by the way, I want you to look at some one; she is an odd-looking woman, or rather girl, quite alone. She has passed by two or three times, walking swiftly; and now she is sitting near you—don't look too soon—and no one has gone to her for pence."

Haringfield gradually brought his eyes to the point indicated by his wife. "See—tall, red-haired, handsomely dressed." He started from his seat, catching his breath in his violent start. "Here, too!" Calista fancied he exclaimed, but the words were half smothered. He stared fixedly at the woman. The white face, the hollow blue eyes of Agatha were once again looking into his.

"Come away," he said abruptly; "it is getting damp."

Calista rose promptly, but she was still watching the lonely figure, and saw that the girl also left her seat and walked swiftly and quietly on to the path; threading her way skilfully through the promenaders, she went before them for some yards, and then the darkness swallowed her up.

"I could have declared," said Calista, "that she disappeared over the cliff, floated over, regardless of the railing. There is certainly something weird in it all."

Haringfield muttered an inaudible response, and Calista was aware that a strange gloom had fallen upon him. Drop by drop collecting, a rivulet is soon formed. Calista could not close her eyes to the fact that some unknown factor had entered into her husband's life. She grew thoughtful over it, and waited. Next she caught cold, and Haringfield went about alone for three days. An acquaintance called and commiserated her for being shut up. "And you have a friend staying with you, have you not?" this lady went on to say. "So tiresome for you not to be able to go about with her. She must be a good walker; I met her with Major Haringfield out at Sandgate, I was driving."

"I am glad he had a companion," returned Calista, "he dislikes

solitary walks ; but I have no one staying with me. He must have joined one of our friends ; we have several here. What was she like ? ”

“ Very tall and slight, handsomely dressed, with remarkably bright red gold hair, and a plain face, so pale and haggard. ”

Calista did not say that this description applied to no friend of hers, but she thought over the coincidence of the resemblance to that figure on the Lees, and when her husband, in answer to her question, said that he had had no companion in his walks she was a little, just a little, disturbed.

In London again. And now Haringfield hoped and believed that he was safe from the extraordinary visitation that he would have unhesitatingly put down to troubled conscience, optical delusion, and so on, if it had not been witnessed by many eyes besides his own.

One night he went to the St. James's theatre without Calista, and there happened to be a vacant seat next his. So far as he was aware, it remained vacant through the performance, in which he was so much interested that he scarcely looked about him to see who was in the house. In coming away he exchanged nods with various friends, and something peculiar in their looks, one and all, struck him. In the crowded entrance-hall he was pinned in just behind a man he knew and his wife. The wife, a tiny woman, whose inquisitive nose seemed to have sharpened upon the anvil of curiosity, was saying in her shrill voice, “ Such an odd-looking woman, so ghastly pale and thin, with that excessively orange hair that it was no use calling gold. And her dress ! It would have been very handsome for three years ago, but in a style quite gone out. He did not talk much to her, but she was staring all the time at him in a manner I consider quite disgraceful. With his pretty, popular wife too. I had no idea that Major Haringfield would be the man to carry on an outrageous flirtation like that. ”

“ Did I not catch my own name ? ” asked the subject of discussion, looking her straight in the face, with a look that said, “ I heard every word. ”

“ Oh, well, since you did hear, do tell me the name of the very striking woman sitting next you, Major Haringfield ? ”

“ On one side of me there was some man, I do not know who. On the other was a vacant stall, ” he answered firmly.

“ Oh, now really ; what a goose you must think me. She was really so very conspicuous that — ” Here the little lady was bustled away to her carriage, and a meaning nod over her shoulder ended the sentence. Haringfield walked away with white lips.

Before many days all of London to whom Major Haringfield was known knew that he had been seen at the theatre, in the Park, at dusk in Pall Mall, also on the embankment, and on the underground railway with a tall, richly-dressed girl, pale faced,

red haired—always the same one. It surprised a good many people; no one knew who or what the girl was. She was gaunt and in bad health, she did not appear attractive, she had never been seen to speak.

It was whispered, to make more of a story, that she had been seen with him both at Folkestone and Brighton.

Major Haringfield, whose wife was popular, was under a cloud.

I was surprised by a note from Major Haringfield one day, requesting for a private interview. Surprised, however, is scarcely the right term. Some of these strange rumours had reached my ears, and I was filled with indignation against the husband of my dear Calista. Already this ungrateful monster of fickleness had been attracted from her by some unworthy object, who had doubtless flattered that old vanity of his; and I was the more disgusted by the resemblance this new flame seemed to bear to the girl who had died of a broken heart for his sake. "If that was really, after all, his taste why did he forsake her?" I asked myself.

I received him coolly, I was not particularly ready to receive him at all. His conduct all along appeared to me despicable.

He came in looking harassed and haggard. "I ought to apologise for troubling you," he began with a gloomy air, "but I can bear it no longer, and in you alone in the world can I dare confide." I looked at him in immeasurable surprise.

"Yes, you alone, for you know all;" he resumed. "The whole miserable story."

"To what story do you refer, Major Haringfield?" I asked. I could not say to "which" story!

Bending his head, in which I saw grey hairs coming, he answered: "There is but one whatever you may have heard. Agatha Broome is avenging the wrong I did her—she—she *comes back*."

How cold I became all of a sudden! Her last words, "I will come back," hissed again in my ears.

"You have heard that I am seen constantly with some woman, you must have. The last time was in my office, a man from the Horse Guards came in. I swear to you as solemnly as a man can swear that it is Agatha, and no other that so—haunts me. Yes, I am a haunted man, and if it were not for Calista, I wish I were a dead one."

I was silent, facing such an announcement as that, what could I say? For this was no hallucination, there was a crowd of witnesses to establish the fact, while yet that fact belonged to some sphere quite outside, and beyond human knowledge.

"This is a very awful thing, Major Haringfield," I said at length. "Have you told your wife?"

"How could I? She never heard of Agatha. Perhaps I should have made a clean breast of it—before she consented to marry an unworthy brute, but it is too late now."

"Why?"

My answer was given by the face of the man. It quivered with fear born of vanity, pride, love. He dreaded inexpressibly any loss of her good opinion.

"Can such things be?" I ejaculated.

"Who can say what can, or cannot be?" he replied. "We know only that we do not know. Only through a chink in the wall here and there do we even find out that the wall itself is there.

"We die like the dogs—well and good—then what is the meaning of all by which we live? But we do not, then there is a life behind the veil even more closely hid from us than our life here. Well we know nothing about it so everything is possible. If it exists for us, we go there with all our rags about us—hopes, fears, moral aims, failures, yearnings, mental powers. Can't exist without the brain? Folly—the brain can't exist without them. We are imperfect here, we leave the world imperfect, and beginning on the other side, we naturally tend towards what we have left—a strong train of ideas, an overmastering feeling cannot be got rid of suddenly. She dogs my steps—I deserve it. 'Who breaks pays.' I broke a woman's heart and life, and she is wrecking mine. Calista begins to be unhappy. You of course consider me heartless, but I cannot bear to see her suffer. What will be the end of it?"

I was actually trembling by this time. I remembered Agatha's dying despair, and threat. "To his life's end." "As I suffered he shall suffer."

I fear I had very little solid consolation to offer. All I could advise was that he should tell his wife. He did not take this advice; I think he was sorry afterwards that he had not done so.

I met Calista out one evening soon after, and was struck by her altered looks. There was a wistful expression, a shadow about her eyes, and above all, a look in those eyes, once seen never to be mistaken, of mental suffering. They were a little brighter than usual, and pupils rather smaller. They held the door upon their secret and yet pleaded that there was no secret behind it. In the face of rumour she had remained staunch, but when her own eyes had witnessed what rumour whispered, she could not but believe. Then, silent to the world, aware of her husband's misery of mind, and waiting, in her great patience of love, to hear his confession, she bore the thing bravely.

This undermined her health, and that is why I say that Major Haringfield regretted that he had not straightway taken my advice.

Wherever he went now, that awful vision was beside him. His conduct, so openly disrespectful and insulting to the wife for whom he professed so much attachment, exasperated people against him. Calista began to be a sharer in his bad repute.

She was blamed, and she found herself in a cold atmosphere that was specially trying to her genial sensitive nature. Major Haringfield came to talk with me at times when he could bear his burden alone no longer. One day he said abruptly. "It tempts me to drink—I see no other way of drowning the horror of it—God forbid that it may come to that miserable refuge, but it seems it must be that, or madness." In truth, the idea that he might be driven out of his mind had occurred to me.

I said: "There is an alternative, you can try it. Suppose you go completely away."

"What! throw up my appointment? It would be ruin to all my future, I should never get anything again. And take Calista abroad, with two little children? No, I cannot do that."

"Ask her opinion—which you ought to have done before. Do you not see how ill and worn she is? Believe me, she suffers far more now than if she knew the truth."

He stared blankly, in a helpless sort of way, then sighing heavily, rose and walked about the room.

"I will see," he said, "thank you—good-bye."

In dark ignorance I wondered over it all, would that bitterly vindictive spirit pursue vengeance until her victim laid down in a dishonoured grave? Was her steadfastness wilful, a scheme laid down, and rigidly carried out? Or on the other hand in carrying out the threat upon her dying lips, was she working her own penance? It seemed to me possible that in her changed conditions she might abhor what yet she was forced by some great moral law to do.

At length the clouds gathered too thickly about them for Calista to remain silent. She entreated her husband, in her direct trust-inspiring manner to tell her all, and then he told her. He called upon me to answer for his story, and I did so, as far as I could, for strangely enough Agatha had never appeared when I was present. The relief to Calista's mind was at once apparent, once she understood the facts of the case, extraordinary as they were, she shewed all her strength of character, and was ready to brave all the world, calmly—in her own dignified sweet way.

"Yes—I have seen her," she said to me, "and I am willing to take my share of her vengeance—poor girl, I pity her from the bottom of my heart, and one of the most painful parts of this strange mysterious visitation is that pity should still be needed by a departed spirit. How I wish that we could comfort her somehow."

I wished, yet dreaded, to see the apparition, but as yet it had never been seen by me.

Calista's fears for her husband had rapidly deepened, taking the terrible form of dread lest he should go mad. He was very unwell and she persuaded him to see a physician. "Tell me the simple truth, have you any fears of mental disease?" she asked the

doctor, hanging upon his words of life or death. "I will tell you the truth, since you alone may help him," he answered. "He is suffering under some mental strain, and I can do little for him. He needs entire change of scene. He should travel."

"It is absolutely necessary?" "Absolutely." Calista told him the strange story. She did this rather than let it come from her husband's lips as there was no question of her sanity. "At any cost he must go," was the ultimatum. This decided the matter; she urged him to throw up everything, money, professional advancement, position, country.

"It means the extinguishing of my whole future," he said. Nevertheless it had to be.

"And if it follows us?"

"It will not," she answered. "I have a feeling that it will not."

But a worse trial yet remained. Calista fell ill, her health had been undermined by these trying months, and professional authority forbade her going to a hot climate, when all Major Haringfield's arrangements for taking an official post in India were settled. There was no help for it. They had taken a cottage on the Thames for the summer months, and I had gone down to them for a day to say good-bye, for by this time all resentment against Major Haringfield had been merged in compassion.

He and I were sitting together on the little terrace, Calista having gone to fetch wraps, for the evening was a little chilly. With his head between his hands, he said, "Surely *she* must be satisfied now she has ruined my life."

Calista returned at this moment, and I saw that her husband could not bear to look her in the face. He rose hastily and murmured that he was going for half an hour's row. The moon was nearly full and shining brilliantly over the broad river. Calista and I watched him put off in the little boat, and began to walk slowly up and down.

Before long the boat came gliding in sight again, we saw it as a dark spot upon the moonlit river, we saw the sparkle of the drip from the oars. Then we both stood still, our eyes fixed by a simultaneous impulse upon *the two figures in that boat*. There sat Major Haringfield, his head bent with his usual air of dejection, and there, opposite him, sat a slight figure, wrapped in furs, whose gaunt pallid face and red gold hair, the moon shewed up clear and terrible in that light which although so familiar never ceases to be strange. Soundlessly but for the dip of the oar they drifted by, he absorbed in thought, she bending forward and looking in his face with a rapt gaze, sullen, despairing and at the same time, as I fancied, inquiring—pitiful.

Suddenly I became aware that I was icy cold from head to foot, my teeth chattered, I trembled violently.

"You see her," whispered Calista. The boat drifted on, the oars scarcely touching the water, the two motionless figures bending

towards one another. As they glided through the brilliant path of light cast by the moon across the river, she slowly lifted a transparent hand and seemed to lay it on his arm. He gave a shuddering start—we looked—and he was alone.

I bade them a sad good-bye next day, and Major Haringfield left for India immediately after.

This is virtually the end of my story. Two years passed wearily by for poor Calista, but that hapless spirit did not follow her husband to India, and this was her comfort.

Perhaps vengeance was sated, perhaps having divided husband from wife passionate jealousy was appeased. Perhaps—and this is my belief—its own weary penance was over, and purged, forgiven, it was no longer suffered to bruise its aching wings against the bars of a life that it had done with. She came no more to haunt and overshadow their lives: even when Major Haringfield came home from the East there was no renewal of those weary wanderings of the troubled spirit.

Poor weak Agatha, poor wasted heart! “I am weak, but not my love.” At rest at last.

Purified for ever, I think the love lived on—and I think—I hope—she forgave him at length.

AT A MONTH'S END.

LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF A MAN OF THE TIME.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS.

By BERTHA THOMAS,

AUTHOR OF "THE VIOLIN PLAYER," "PROUD MAISIE," ETC., ETC.

PART III.

"Seulette," Normandy, October 2.—I had expected to find the uninhabited villa at Conington a cheerless, lifeless spectacle. Instead, the bright flower garden, raised blinds, furniture exactly as usual, library unentered since I left it last week, made one forget the nest was vacant, the birds flown. I expected to hear Lister humming a tune, according to his habit, in the passage, Jack shouting to Bob in the garden, Ella's hand on the door. The crone who lodges at the ruins gave me the house key. I was free to remain till nightfall if I chose.

I proposed to spend an hour or two in the library, looking through some columns of oddities as yet unexplored. Well alone in the house, I could not yet fix my attention. The Lister children, more especially Ella, were fond of assuring me the library was haunted. I could believe it this time. Dr. Lister's shade came and looked over my shoulder; the bookcases creaked; I was aware of strange intermittent raps and rustlings. I knew it was merely because the dead silence, as at night, brought out sounds that get lost in the hum and stir of day. Distinctly I seemed to hear Ella's low laugh in the garden. Here was witchcraft! Her image fastened on my imagination with a kind of obsession. There was no moral obligation to resist it just then, I assured myself, since she was already far off. I dwelt long on the bewildering personality of one whose strength seemed in part the result of her singular deficiencies, and who had exerted all her power of personal attraction to carry me out of myself for a moment with an audacity that had succeeded; then came the puzzle of her subsequent avoidance.

My distraction was complete. I was neither reading nor writing when, after a lapse of time of which I could give little account, a slight rustling in the bushes against the window made me look up. No ghost, but Ella, looking in at me out of the daphne sprigs behind the glass with eager and imperious eyes. With a quick movement she lifted the sash, sprang in, and stood beside me, saying in her old bright, resolute way:

"Take me with you."

Had I been *expecting* the apparition? I could not even feign the surprise that in reason I should have felt.

"I said I should haunt this place," she said with a cool disdain and a careless glance round. "I have come to bid good-bye."

"Good-bye?" I repeated confusedly.

"To it—not to you." As she spoke, with a sudden change of voice—murmuringly, caressingly, I made an involuntary movement of my arms towards her. Like a dart she flew there, clung to me like a twining plant, in her face that absolute joy that is sufficient to itself—that will look no further. Neither did I. I kissed her fervently. Once of her own will she touched my lips with hers, lightly, almost reverently, at the same time throwing a passionate, imperious glance into mine, and saying:

"Take me with you!"

"Ella!"

"Ah—you refuse?" In an instant she had freed herself and stood before me with flashing eyes and a sort of wild anger that became her better than sweetness becomes most women.

"What is your good pleasure?" I asked unsteadily.

"Listen," she said, falling into a persuasive tone, and she laid her head on my shoulder, saying in a soft whisper that was like a kiss in itself: "You are to be fond of me for a little while—a little while—there, where there is nothing to come between us."

"Ella," I faltered, "you will make me mad."

"Like me!" and she laughed. "I wish to. For a little while, I said, and then—I ask nothing more; I am not afraid to look beyond. Need you?"

I gazed at her, abandoning all attempt to fathom the mystery of a nature apparently simple, yet whose workings and motives eluded me even now. Who had unlocked for her those secret chambers of the soul, of whose very existence one supposed her unsuspecting—an ignorance which the least scrupulous of mankind would feel bound religiously to respect? She asked with triumph,

"Isn't it well done? It is just four days since I heard that that sick woman at Brighton was suddenly worse and couldn't have me immediately. I never told *them*. I wrote back that uncle would be willing for me to sail with them and that I had arranged everything. So nobody knew. When, where the railway follows the coast, I saw across the sea-wall the masts of the steamer out on her way, I felt I was free. I left the train at a station six miles off and walked here across the fields. I met nothing. No one saw me come in. No one will ask after me, or know, or care to know, any more than if you caught that swallow darting about the lawn its mother would ask what had become of him. Take me with you to Normandy to-night."

"To Normandy?"

"You are to think of me and nothing else for a month. Let me be your bride for that time. After that you are to forget me for ever."

* * * * *

The *Mouette*, a small French vessel, left Dartcombe for Petit Port that night. The crew were all foreigners; the passengers—there were but two—remained on deck throughout the stillest and warmest of autumn nights. A dead calm out at sea, a light fog filling the air—now and then a black-masted, dark-sailed ship loomed suddenly out of the mist, phantom-like, close alongside. Looking back, the journey seems unreal—one long vivid impression of strangeness and wonder. I sit here in my study at Seulette, which we reached but an hour ago, journeying straight on from Petit Port, where we landed at noon. But that Ella, who, resting after a night and day of travel, has fallen asleep on the ottoman and is there before me, I could declare, even now, that our flight was a dream.

* * * * *

Seulette, November, 1880.—Ella had her will. For the space of time that now began I lived for her alone, dead to the existence of a world outside her presence—satisfied to find my world in her eyes and lips—an interlude, cut off on every side from past and future,—like an island in the sea. We had taken a trip from the earth to a star. Only we could not annihilate the earth nor stay in the star. The first would reclaim its truant subjects; the second cast us out sooner or later as runaway aliens, and then for a rude and dismal awakening. But if ever the shadow of forethought, afterthought or perplexity crossed my mind, Ella, quick to detect it, would resent it with mastering vehemence.

"Haven't I forbidden you to think? Haven't you promised to forget there are such things as a world and society, and work and fame? For a little while, remember. You are to forget *me* afterwards."

"The first one can promise, Ella," I said, "but the second——"

"I will take care of that," was her reply.

She too had her rare moments of musing and brooding. Where did her mind go to? Of regret and anxiety never a trace. For her, will was paramount, to legitimize desire—scruples, doubts, fears, hesitations not only scouted but annihilated. She shook off the sheath of social convention and custom and stepped forth as free and wild as the Russalka to which my fancy had likened her. Fresh as forest leaves in the spring time, wild and bright as the birds, perfect as a creature, full of natural but intractable intelligence, yet to whom certain common sympathetic qualities are utterly foreign. One of those in whom weakness excites no pity but cruel contempt. Self-absorbed, they will see their neighbour's house burn and sit by warming their hands. In revolt against the restrictions of a common-place lot, they will break through

them to have their romance out, no matter the cost. And yet I think she had counted it.

Her brief sovereignty was complete and assured by the single-mindedness of her self-devotion. She would pour forth all the treasure of her bright young spirit, all the attractions of her beauty to keep me to herself for an hour. The passion of admiration thus roused entangled reason and silenced it. But for her passion and reason were in unison—she shrank neither from looking back nor looking onward.

One evening was wild and stormy. We did not take our usual ramble on the cliffs—grander and more desolate than those of Devonshire, but stayed in the *châlet*, which lay in a sheltered hollow on the side of a promontory. Ella stood at the window watching the lightning on the sea. I was at the table bending idly over some sketches of the coast. Suddenly I felt her beside me. She could be noiseless in her movements as a snake. She slid her arm round my neck. I drew her down on the ottoman where I was seated—she looked at me, bright and a little fierce, saying :

“Are you mine still?”

“Ella,” I said, in playful entreaty, “what are you going to do with me? I thought I was yours when we came—I know now I was not—you had made me forget all but you—you have made me despise it.”

She laughed contentedly, leaned her head on my shoulder and looked up into my face. Was it a little panther that had taken a fancy to come and nestle in my arms, to caress and be caressed, yet remaining as untouched by sentimental influences as the wildest specimen of its race?

I grew idle, as regardless as a lotus-eater of the lapse of time; whilst she seemed to prize and cling to every passing instant, as if determined to crowd the sensations of years into a single day. I had given up speculating, puzzling about her—she had forced me to take her and love her as to me she was—passionate, adoring, a little Lucifer of pride withal, but enchanting so long as you were satisfied to suffer her thus to hold you in thrall.

Most of the fine autumn evenings we spent in exploring the lonely shores. She seemed insensible to cold or fatigue. Sometimes we sailed on the sea—her will prevailing over my judgment, for the coast is notoriously unsafe. But the rougher the weather, the crankier the boat, the greater for Ella the enjoyment. Once we had a narrow escape. Scudding along, we were approaching a dangerous sunken reef, and I barely noticed the breakers in time to call to Ella, who was steering, to shift the rudder. Quickly she looked up, saw, wavered; and then she was about, so I thought, to run us deliberately on the rocks. I threw myself forwards, and with difficulty, by good luck, averted a catastrophe, our boat just grazing the sunken reef.

“Ella, are you mad?” I exclaimed.

"Don't!" she said, disarming sternness by her imploring tone and glance; then, presently, after we had sailed some minutes in silence: "You forget what a little while I have left me," she said quite seriously, "but every moment counts. You are right; I should be mad to throw one away."

Then she talked and laughed in a merrier strain, setting herself to draw off my thoughts from the incident, until, looking back on it, it appeared insignificant. She had contrived to lay the ghost of a misgiving that never again started up until one evening, ten days later, she made me a strange scene.

It was late, nearly midnight, but we were still sitting up downstairs in the *châlet*, I leaning back on the sofa, idle-headed, like the *fainéant* I had become, watching Ella as she moved about. I saw her take a bunch of flowers, gathered yesterday, from the vase where she had placed them, to throw them away.

"Why destroy them?" I asked.

"I hate to see things I like fade," she said. "It is better to kill them off before they begin to look ugly." And she threw them into the fire. She stood for some moments abstractedly watching them shrivel and crackle. I was absorbed in watching the blaze's play on her face, with its vivid colouring, and the rich auburn tints in her hair. She came up to me and sat on a cushion at my feet, saying:

"Do you know when we came here, how long ago?"

"Not in the least," I replied. "Was it yesterday—or last year, perhaps?"

"That is right," she said approvingly. "Not too long—that means it has been long enough."

"Long enough?" I repeated vacantly.

"Did you think I should wait until you got tired of it and of me, to make an end?"

"Of what?"

She looked at me gravely, with something very like tenderness in her countenance, and said, almost wistfully:

"And so you have really forgotten who you are, and that you do not belong to yourself, nor to me, nor could you ever."

"Ella," I said, "you are certainly a witch. For I have entirely forgotten that life and I had anything to say to each other until a month ago."

The confession seemed singularly to content her. Her manner had something in it now of the generosity of the victor.

"Well," she said, coming closer, and speaking with an odd mixture of archness and sadness, "I must remind you. You were born one of the things they call men of the time—they crowned you long ago. You have your worshippers everywhere—oh, I know—I was one."

"Was?" I repeated, in playful reproach. She gave a provoking smile, and continued:

"Of course the world will call you back, and you will want to go. I asked you to throw everything aside for me. For a little while—I said I would be your bride for a month—I was nobody—nothing—that you should care for me more than that. It was not much, but it was a thousand times better worth having than anything my life would ever bring me—it was all you could possibly give me, you know."

"Nay, Ella——" I began. She checked my reckless protest, saying:

"You would not then, you could not now. Why should you try? Because you would not like another person to suffer through you?"

"Who would?" said I.

"I should not mind," said Ella clearly. "But you are not to think of me as suffering. Look at me now—do I look unhappy, Hubert?"

The face she turned to me was radiant—nay, exultant.

"Then why, Ella," I asked, "will you talk as though we could part?"

Her reply was a passionate embrace. It was her way thus to lead your reason a dance, pique you on to an argument, then confound you by some unexpected turn, leaving you to surmise that she had been laughing at you.

One o'clock—we were still there. Ella seemed possessed by a very demon of gaiety and wild spirits: she lit all the Chinese lanterns in the study, flitted about the room like an odalisque; she sang songs, wild old airs she had caught up from the fisher-folk, played fitful snatches on the piano. We watched the falling stars and meteoric lights from the window, then as I reclined on the sofa she pretended to mesmerize me with the light touch of her hand on my forehead.

"Are you tired?" she said in a hushed voice. "Sleep a little."

I sank into a deep sleep. Waking suddenly, as it were from an unremembered dream, I was conscious of a slight jarring shock, as though I had been struck. All was still, the wind had sunk—no sound in the chalet. I took out my watch, I had slept some hours; the Chinese lanterns had burnt out, but there was light in the room, for dawn was breaking. Ella was not there. Nor was she to be found anywhere in the chalet. There was nothing alarming in that. It would be just like her to finish up a *nuît blanche* by walking out at daybreak. I started off along the slope of the promontory. The sun was still below the horizon, but it was now fully light. From the point above, where there was a wide view, I could not fail to see, and should soon overtake her. But the single figure thence visible was that of a bent, decrepit old peasant woman gathering mushrooms in a meadow. I hastened towards her; she anticipated my inquiry:

"Monsieur is looking for Madame?" she said.

"You have seen her pass?"

"I saw her come out of the chalet an hour ago. It was hardly light, but for the moon, which had not dropped. I said, Madame is early. She said she wanted, for once, to see the sun rise from the sea, but would not wake you. As she walked quickly along, near the cliff's edge, I called to her to have a care—my poor nephew Pierre lost his life there, the ground gave way, he fell into the abyss and was never seen again. Madame listened and nodded, but laughed as if she mocked my caution. All you English are thus—so full of temerity, I said to myself, and returned to my work. When next I looked she was out of sight. Which way she went I could not tell you. Is Monsieur anxious?"

I strode on to the end of the promontory. Up and down the cliffs I looked. No sign of human life, nor visible trace of recent accident or disturbance of the soil.

The sun rose up in splendour, flooding the waves that sparkled and glistened; then the light caught the fields, shedding glow and luminance over sea and shore.

A single sea-bird was flying out eastward, as it were towards the sun. My eyes followed the flash of its white wings till to the dazzled sight it was lost in the golden blaze.

Some words of Ella's had come suddenly back on my mind, spoken one day when we were watching the petrels, gannets and tern in one of their favourite rocky haunts:

"When I am dead I should like my soul to go back into one of those sea-birds."

"Go back?" I repeated, laughing.

"Yes," she said musingly, following with envy their wild flight, as they skimmed the waters, or, soaring upwards, alighted on inaccessible crags; "I am sure it was from one of those that it came to me."

"You may say more," I rejoined playfully, "for I think, Ella, the metamorphosis is incomplete."

Search was fruitless. Fears, first, of some fatal piece of rashness; then, the darker fear that she had voluntarily given up her life as the only end she could accept for herself to our brief madness, leaving me her memory safe and pure, as a legacy of intolerable regret for her loss, met with no scrap of direct confirmation.

Returning to the chalet I found the old servant who came daily to do the work of the house, and who had been there, it appeared, since sunrise. Ella had not come in.

I walked into the sitting-room. Some word of writing or sign left behind might yet end the suspense. None; except that on the table by the sofa there lay a fresh white carnation flower, plucked that morning, for it was still wet with dew. She had

gone out to gather it whilst I was sleeping, and placed it there—a token of farewell.

[The journal breaks off here. The following note appears to have been added five years later.]

London, December, 1885.

It was some six weeks after this that the first and last news—if news it can be called—came to me of Ella in a letter from Captain Lister, in New Zealand, to my London address. It found me still at Seulette, where the futility of my unremitting inquiries had well-nigh forced me to abandon hope and them.

Captain Lister, in the course of his letter, related incidentally that the family had scarcely set foot in their new abode than they had been thunderstruck by a communication from Ella, despatched apparently immediately after their departure, and informing them of her extraordinary resolution, unsuspected for a moment by her relations, to bury herself in a French convent. She had concealed her intentions in order to avoid useless attempts at dissuasion. Further clue that might help to the discovery of her whereabouts she had given absolutely none. She was legally her own mistress; no one had the right to interfere, nor was there any one at hand to do so to any purpose. The death of her aunt at Brighton had occurred shortly after the Listers' departure for the Antipodes. The captain, over there, had his hands full, and already when he wrote he and his were beginning to get over their surprise, and to recollect that Ella had always been eccentric—the very girl for a *coup de tête* such as this. That the inquiries he talked vaguely of making would lead to nothing was a foregone conclusion. Mine, which were now actively renewed, especially at Bordeaux, and other towns to which boats went from Petit Port, proved entirely unavailing.

Five years ago now. I shall never know more. No; though the door has been left open to surmise, to stray conjecture. Only last autumn, passing through A——, in the heart of France, I listened to the idle town tittle-tattle concerning a certain large Sisterhood there established, and one among them, reputed to be of English origin, but who, according to the current gossip, bade fair to dominate the community, as the community by their successful activity in education and nursing and other public services practically dominated the town. But the strict rules of the Order stood in the way of any attempt I might be prompted to make to find here a solution of the mystery. Be this as it may, our union, by her own unfettered choice, was ended that morning she left me as irrevocably as though I knew what I surmise—that her life was cut short the same hour.

SHOULD I HAVE SPOKEN?

By A. T. RAIKES.

PART I.

EARLY in the year of 1875 I received an invitation from an old friend of mine, Colonel Armitage, to run down to his house, Medlicott Grange, in Berkshire, for some hunting and a couple of balls.

As in those days I was—well, some years younger than I am now, and (having but lately returned from India on sick leave) very keen on all sorts of English amusements, I wrote off a hurried note of acceptance, and speedily followed it.

I knew Mrs. Armitage slightly, and was well acquainted with the colonel's taste in champagne, besides which I had met, not long before, an uncommonly pretty sister of his, whom I thought it would be by no means unpleasant to meet again; so I started off in the best of spirits to catch the 4.30 train at Paddington.

I calculated a run of two hours will give me ample time for the three miles drive from the station, and to dress for dinner at eight. However, vain were my hopes; there was a break-down on the line, which kept me kicking my heels at a wretched little junction for over an hour, and we only reached Eastbury station at 7 o'clock. There was no help for it. I dashed into the carriage sent to meet me, and arrived at the Grange in as short a time as Armitage's steady old coachman would allow, but found my host alone, awaiting me in the hall, with outstretched hand and genial welcome.

I knew he was a regular martinet for punctuality, so was not surprised when he hurried me up directly to my room, with orders to dress sharp. It was a large and well appointed room, with a bright fire and candles, which looked very cheery after my cold drive.

"All right, old chap, I'll send Reggie up to show you the way down in a quarter of an hour," were the colonel's last words, as he left me to my toilet.

I dressed rapidly, but remembering the long passages, unexpected steps, intricate turnings and numerous staircases I had traversed on my way up, waited for my promised conductor.

Suddenly the gong thundered through the house, and I, thinking I was forgotten, put out my candles and turned to the

door—when it was softly opened, and a young man appeared, who beckoned to me.

I followed him into the passage, which was rather dark, and began to say something expressive of my obligation to him; but he silenced me with a wave of the hand, and preceded me, with noiseless steps and averted face, along the passage.

I thought this was odd, but my surprise increased when he took an abrupt turn to the left, which I did not remember, and we found ourselves in a long, low, oak-panelled corridor, dimly lighted by a hanging lamp.

I began to feel a curious sensation stealing over me, and endeavoured to speak, but was withheld by an undefined feeling, so followed my guide in perfect silence to the end of the corridor. He then passed through a green baize door, up a flight of corkscrew stairs, and through another passage, I still feeling myself impelled to follow, till he stopped, opened a door, and stood back for me to pass before him.

I had not seen his face before, but had observed he was above the middle height, with a good figure and rather military gait, his hair was fair and cut very short.

Now, however, I saw his face: it was ashy white, with such an expression of horror and fear in his widely-opened eyes as froze my blood; I again made an ineffectual attempt to speak to him, but he motioned me imperiously to enter, and I felt constrained to obey.

I found myself in an oddly-shaped room, only lighted by the pale rays of the winter moon, which shone in coldly through the curtainless windows. It was evidently an unused apartment, for there was no carpet, and my footsteps sounded hollow on the boards.

Between the windows, half in shadow, half in moonlight, stood a large bed. As I gazed upon it, my eyes became gradually accustomed to the dim light, and I observed with a shudder that it was draped with black, and decorated with tall black plumes like those on a hearse,—and that there was a motionless form extended upon it.

I glanced round for my guide—he was gone, and the door was shut, though I had heard no sound.

A thrill of horror ran through my veins, I felt an almost irresistible desire for flight, but again the same inexplicable force urged me on, and I approached the bed with slow and trembling steps.

There lay a young, and as far as I could see, beautiful girl; dressed as a bride, in white satin and lace, a wreath of orange blossoms on her head and the long white veil covering, though not obscuring, her features; but oh! horror!—the front of her dress and veil were all dabbled and soaked in blood which I could see flowed from a deep open gash in her white throat.

My head swam—and I remembered no more * * * * * Suddenly I felt a cold shock in my face, and opened my eyes to find myself on the ground with my head supported by my kind host, who was looking down on me with anxiety expressed in his face. As my bewildered senses reasserted themselves, I remembered what I had seen, and with an exclamation sprang to my feet. There was the same bed, but in the bright light I saw that it was without the ghastly appendages I had seen before, and was totally untenanted. Colonel Armitage began asking me some questions, but seeing that I was much too dazed to answer, he took me by the arm, and half led me, half supported me, for I was still faint and giddy, back to my own room. When there he put me into an armchair, gave me a glass of water, and exclaimed: "My dear fellow! What on earth is the matter with you? We sent Reggie up for you, but he came down saying you had gone. We waited ten minutes, then, thinking you had lost your way, instituted a regular search, and I found you up in the old turret chamber, in a dead faint on the floor!" I pulled myself together, and, as collectedly as I could, told him what had happened. He listened with incredulity and then said: "My dear Bruce, you have been dreaming!"

"Why?" I said, rather nettled, "how do you suppose I could have *dreamt* myself into that room? I tell you, Armitage, that I was as wide awake as you are, and am perfectly certain that what I saw was no dream."

"Well, then, the only other explanation is that you must have been screwed!"

"Really," I said, attempting to force a laugh, "I only left town at 4.30, and there's not much to be got out of a railway flask." Then, as he uttered a disbelieving "Hm-m," I added despondently, "I wish to goodness I could think I was."

"Look here," said Armitage seriously, "don't you go talking about this to anybody but me; of course there are stories about this house, as of every old house in England, but nobody has ever seen or imagined anything uncanny before, and it will frighten Mrs. Armitage to death if you tell her; she is awfully delicate, and I don't want to alarm her."

"All right," I said, "but I wish it hadn't happened to me; I feel frightfully shaky still."

"Oh, nonsense, come down to dinner; a good glass of champagne will set you to rights," said he. Accordingly I made an effort to shake off the depression on my spirits and went down with him. The bright lights, cheerful talk, and clatter of plates, seemed terribly incongruous, and I am afraid pretty Miss Armitage must have thought me quite off my head, for I could eat nothing, drank feverishly, and replied at random to all her remarks and condolences, while the dead face of the murdered girl floated before my eyes and nearly distracted me. "I'm afraid

you don't feel at all well, Captain Bruce," she said at last. "Please don't think me dreadfully rude," I replied, "but if I could slip out unobserved, I should be most grateful."

She signalled to Reggie, a bright-faced boy in an Eton jacket, whom I begged to show me upstairs, for the perturbation of my spirits were such that, though I felt awfully ashamed of myself, I literally dared not attempt to find my way up alone for fear of meeting my mysterious guide again. The fire burnt brightly in my room, the candles were lit, and it presented the same appearance of luxurious ease I had before observed. Reggie regarded me with round eyes of awe, evidently restrained only by his father's prohibition from deluging me with questions; I detained him as long as I could with trivial excuses, for a nervous horror of solitude began to possess me, but I saw he was anxious to be off again to his dinner, so I let him go.

I went to the glass—and recoiled: I hardly knew myself. My hair lay damply on my forehead, my face was very pale, and there was the haunted look in my eyes I had seen in *his*. Very soon the door opened—I started nervously; but it was only the colonel with a steaming tumbler. "Look here," he said, "just drink this off and get into bed, you'll be all right in the morning." I did so, and the punch, which was, I suppose, a pretty stiff mixture, did send me off into a heavy dreamless sleep, which lasted till my blinds were drawn up by the servant in the morning letting in fresh sunshine, which speedily dispelled the illusions of the previous night—for illusions I was fain to believe them—in the face of the bright wintry landscape before me, and the cheery sounds of life in a country house which stole up to my ears through the echoing corridors.

A whole day in the saddle, and a splendid run, followed by a cosy game of billiards with Miss Mabel Armitage before dinner, decided me, ghosts or no ghosts, not to show myself ungrateful to my kind hosts by cutting short my visit as I had thought of doing when my first impressions were strong upon me. And I found no reason to regret this decision when a most enjoyable ball was followed by another night or portion of a night of unbroken slumber.

The next day we spent in the covers, the ladies came out to give us our luncheon, and I came home to dress for dinner in a most jubilant frame of mind, much inclined to put my fate to the touch with Miss Mabel; hoping that, be my deserts as small as they might, I should win, not "lose it all." Some country neighbours were expected to dinner, and I was standing in a deep window-seat with Mabel and listening to her merry descriptions of them as they were ushered into the room by the stately butler—when "Sir George and Miss Hildyard" were announced, and there entered—dressed in white—the girl I had seen in my dream!

I stood transfixed, and Mabel exclaimed: "Oh, Captain Bruce,

what is the matter?" But I could not answer. Before my eyes rose again that darkened room, that funereal bed, and the lifeless form of her who now advanced towards me, led by Mrs. Armitage.

"Miss Hildyard, Captain Bruce." I bowed as in a dream, but saw a look of surprise cross her face, and she glanced inquiringly at Mabel, who replied by a reassuring nod.

As soon as I could get an opportunity, I took Colonel Armitage aside, and whispered to him—"For heaven's sake, Armitage, am I mad? *That is the girl.*" He shook me impatiently by the shoulder and said, "'Pon my word, Bruce, I begin to think you *are*. That is one of the nicest girls I know. She's engaged to Lovett of the —th, and they are to be married soon after Easter. For goodness' sake don't go and frighten her by staring like a death's head."

"I can't take her down to dinner," I said. "I should be sure to make a fool of myself, somehow."

"Very well," he rejoined, "you can take in Mabel and I will arrange it."

So it was, but though I was some way from Miss Hildyard I couldn't help watching her and picturing how differently I had first seen her face. I longed to confide in Mabel, but Colonel Armitage's injunction silenced me; and she, with gentle tact, forbore to remark my evident disturbance, and talked easily on indifferent subjects till I was able to collect myself.

Indeed, so charming was she that at last the demon of superstition was successfully exorcised, and I could talk and laugh like anybody else.

After dinner I even ventured to accost Miss Hildyard, whom I found very agreeable, with nothing in the least supernatural about her; so once more I made up my mind that I was the victim of some extraordinary hallucination, and resolved to think of it no more. Well—time passed; I was obliged to say good-bye to my kind friends with much regret (though it was tempered by a whispered assurance from Mabel that I might come and see her in London) and returned to my duties.

One day, soon after my return, I was driving down St. James' Street in a hansom with my young brother, when I discerned a figure in the distance walking before us which seemed familiar. The back only was visible, but somehow I knew that tall figure, those broad shoulders, that alert, regular stride.

As we passed he turned his face towards us and—good Heavens! it was *he*; my guide that terrible night at Medlicott. I could not be mistaken in those features, those eyes, though they had lost the wild, hunted look I remembered so well.

Was I awake or dreaming?

I stopped the cab, to my brother's intense surprise, jumped out, with what intention I hardly know, and rapidly followed him. He turned up King Street and went into a house, opening the door

with a latch-key, and shutting it behind him. I remained hesitating—what should I do next? I decided on ringing the bell; it was answered by a decorous-looking man-servant.

"What is the name of that gentleman who has just gone in here?"

"Mr. Lovett, sir, of the —th," was the reply. I felt stunned. Surely this was more than a coincidence!

The servant looked doubtfully at me. "Want to see him, sir?" "N—no—" I stammered, quite unable to make up my mind. Fortunately at this moment my hansom, which had followed me, came up, and I jumped in, leaving the man gazing after me. At that moment, in his opinion, I was clearly a suitable patient for Colney Hatch!

Now, what should I do? Should I call on Mr. Lovett, and speak to him, or should I warn Miss Hildyard? What proof had I, what right, a perfect stranger, to interfere with the private concerns of two people whom I had never met, never even heard the names of before?

Besides, after all, what had I to tell? The dream of a disordered imagination! I should only be laughed at for my pains and treated with incredulity. But, again, ought I to keep such an extraordinary occurrence from the knowledge of the two principal actors? I thought over this question till my brain reeled, and finding at last that every one to whom I dared confide either treated the facts as impossible or laughed me to scorn at the notion of thinking seriously of believing such a wildly imaginary case—as, of course, I could only put it hypothetically—I decided to let things take their course, and be guided by circumstances.

PART II.

A WEEK or two passed. I had seen Mabel several times and at last had ventured on asking her that question on which all my happiness depended. I need not describe here my joy at receiving the reply I longed for from the sweetest lips that ever breathed. I implored for a short engagement, and her mother being a tender-hearted old lady promised I should not have to wait long, and our marriage was settled to take place as soon after Easter as possible.

In the meanwhile I waited as patiently as might be, spending my time between business in London and flying visits to friends for hunting, etc., until a week before the day that I felt sure would secure my lifelong happiness.

One morning I received a note from some friends in the Isle of Wight asking me to come down for a ball at Ryde. As I had nothing particular to do, and Mabel was away on a visit, I accepted the invitation and went down the same day.

I found my friends had taken rooms in the hotel, and were a large and lively party. In the evening the waiter came to me and asked, apologetically, if I would mind changing my room, which was a large one, for another, as they had received a telegram from a young married couple engaging a room for that night, and, owing to the pressure caused by the ball, all their rooms were full, with the exception of a small one next door to mine, which they asked me to take. Of course I consented to the change, and my things were moved.

After the ball I came to bed at about three o'clock in the morning, and was sitting by my open window smoking a cigarette and listening to the dull boom of the waves, in a half sleepy condition, when there seemed to come over me again that strange chill of fear I had felt once before. My senses seemed preternaturally sharpened, and, above the gentle rush of the waves, I could hear somebody breathing in the next room. I listened intently—fearing I knew not what—the breathing came short, almost in gasps, and I heard stealthy movements. The rest of the hotel was wrapped in sleep. I rose to my feet, feeling sure that something was wrong, when I heard a short struggle, a heavy fall, and a wild, piercing scream in a woman's voice, that haunts me still. I rushed to the door, and was met on the threshold by—I knew it!—*the man I had seen in my vision before*. He was in evening dress, much disordered, his shirt front and right arm were stained with blood, and in his right hand he grasped a razor, from which some ghastly drops still trickled. The light of insanity shone in his eyes, as, with a demoniacal shriek of laughter, he flung himself upon me.

Now began a most fearful struggle for life. The maniac seemed to have the strength of ten men, while the whole of my being seemed centred in an intense desire to rush past him to the next room, only the instinct of self-preservation causing me to hold by the arm in which he held his weapon. However, I was soon reinforced by a hurrying crowd of servants and visitors, all in the most grotesque attire, with horror depicted on their faces.

He was dragged from me by main force and held down by many hands, while I burst open the next door and entered. Ah! A flood of remorse came over me as I recognized the scene I had feared, nay, knew I should see.

The moonlight pouring in at the window revealed to me the whole tragedy. There, half on, half off the bed lay that inanimate form, bloodstains all over the clothes and floor. The people who had crowded in after me stood dumb, as in a sort of stupor. I approached the bed, and recognized the features of her whom I had known as Agnes Hildyard.

The rest of my story is soon told. I had to give evidence before the magistrates as to what I had seen, and the unfortunate Lovett,

who had sunk into a state of insensibility, was removed to the nearest asylum pending the arrival of his friends.

I found that I had received in my struggle with him a severe wound in the shoulder, the loss of blood from which, acting upon a highly excited brain, caused a severe illness which confined me to my room for many weeks, during much of which time I was delirious.

When at last, much reduced in strength, and with my nerves considerably shattered, I crept out into the sunshine, I felt that my youth had left for ever. I was ordered a long sea voyage, and my brave and loving Mabel insisted upon our immediate marriage, so that she could accompany and nurse me. To her unselfish care I owe, not only my life, but what was thought almost doubtful at one time, my reason; for the misery of regret I suffered, added to the horror of the events, preyed upon my nerves to such an extent that I was nearly sinking into a state of settled melancholia.

However, change of scene, and her bright and tender companionship acted like a charm, and before many months my health was re-established, but my haunting self-reproach can never be stilled.

Had it not been for my cowardly fear of ridicule, perchance this terrible tragedy might have been averted. Even if I had been looked upon as a visionary, it might have come to light that there *was* insanity in the Lovett family (as I have since learnt *was* the case), and the poor girl's relations might have delayed or even prevented the marriage. Who knows? I cannot enter into the vexed question of psychics. All I know is, that these events happened to me exactly as I have written them down, and if I did not act upon them it was not because I had not been forewarned.

CHIFFON'S CHAINS.

By EVELINE MICHELL FARWELL.

CENTURY by century, since Eve first fashioned fig-leaves into garments, the despotism of dress has so grown and spread that its sway is now more or less acknowledged by every nation. The laws which it lays down vary considerably according to climatic and natural peculiarities, but, from the savage, whose wardrobe consists of beads and feathers, to the London beauty, oscillating between Worth, Felix, Schwaebe, and White, all women of all climates and complexions are governed by the despot Dress.

Voracious as a vampire, he devours time, money, health and beauty, for as those ghastly visitants were ever wont to choose the young and lovely for their prey, so Dress would fain absorb all beauty to himself, that it may feed him as fresh life-blood did the vampires. They, however, had things more their own way than does dress, for all but omnipotent though he be, he cannot choose his court; no one ever thought of offering himself to a vampire, but thousands enrol themselves slaves of dress. Old, shrivelled, unlovely, what matter? for threescore years or more the despot has swayed their lives, and now must still acknowledge them his subjects, *bon gré, mal gré*.

Lurking secretly in places where Fashion's frivolities are least suspected, King Chiffon's influence undermines the steadiest souls. The plainest, neatest old countrywoman is often as enslaved by him as a reigning beauty, for fashion is not dress, though we are apt to think it so. To many a buxom farmer's wife, her Sunday gown and bonnet are as much the insignia of office, dubbing her a devoted disciple of dress, as are beauty's court train and feathers. To wear their honours worthily is the aim and object of both, though their ways of doing it are somewhat diverse.

Dress, like many another deity, is worshipped under many different names, and approached with ceremonies representing all shades of orthodoxy and dissent. Orthodoxy may be regarded as ruled by Pope Fashion, from whose bulls and canons none may depart under pain of excommunication, unless indeed they obtain an indulgence. This, however, is seldom granted to any save the mighty few powerful enough to cause the Papal throne to totter with the scornful stamp of haughty heels.

The ranks of dissent are swelled by members of many sects and denominations, from the æsthete crowned with fresh lilies, draped in fading greens, to the dowager still clinging to the purples and

magentas of her youth. Most people rule their wardrobes with a view to special occasions, regarding each addition to their chiffons as a step towards the paradise on which their minds are set. This, however, is only the case when means are more or less limited. Women who lavish one or two thousand a year in their despot's service are, or at any rate should be, armed at all points; but when it is a question of hundreds and not too many of them, it is necessary to decide what *must* be possessed and what *might* be dispensed with.

It is not wise to spread all our jam on our first piece of bread, leaving none for number two. Mutilated remains of last season's dresses are neither useful nor ornamental in the country. Do we not all know the dragged dreariness of velvet skirts made London length and finished up, unquestionably finished, in muddy country lanes?

Disciples of dress, can, I think be set no harder task than the amalgamation of town and country clothes. Short striped skirts, with their neat drapery of serge or homespun and closely-fitting bodice, delight one's eye in country roads, but meet them in Bond Street and how great is the revulsion in our feelings.

Doubtless the mud there is quite as abundant and of a greasier quality, but those "sensible suitable skirts," as we had called them, look all ungainly here, and the neat strong boots which had so won our admiration are now anathema maranatha. The costume is, I suppose, still trim, the boots and bodice still well-fitting, but it is "not London," and therefore stands condemned.

What a strange subtle thing this "London" look is! It admits of no definition. Like the ingredients for Vivian Grey's famous punch, one must just catch the aroma. It cannot be distilled, corked up in bottles "to be well shaken before taken," nor can the prescription be made up even if obtained. Of two women turned out by the same dressmaker, milliner, and boot-maker, on the same estimate, one will emerge so *chic* from head to foot that one cannot pause to analyse the perfect whole, while of the other we most probably remark that her gown is handsome, her bonnet decidedly Parisian, but we wind up by wondering "where she came from and why she looks like that."

Dressmakers perhaps study the *personnel* too much, the *personnage* too little, and as hairdressers so often render lovely faces positively plain by dint of fashionable coiffure utterly unsuited to the face it frames, so the best dressmakers, when left to themselves, turn out figures whose want of harmony would goad true devotees of dress to madness. That the ornament of one woman is the detriment of another is as true as that "one man's meat is another man's poison." An exquisite combination of lace and cachemire draperies, forming an elegant tea-gown when worn by a tall slight figure, becomes a sloppy bunched-up dressing-gown upon some stout little copyist, while short lace evening

dresses, delightfully girlish for small people, suggest school-rooms and bread and butter when worn by damsels tall and stately. Every woman should be taught in childhood that if she cannot dress herself nobody will be able to dress her. Kittens of the tenderest age try their best to aid their mother in her care of their fur, but many a woman leaves all consideration for the outward man to others, and placing herself unresistingly in the hands of maids and milliners, faces a critical world in guise ungainly, though in fashion foremost.

Dress without individuality is a weariness to the eye. It is not, perhaps, necessary, nor in most cases, would it be wise, to adopt Oscar Wilde's theory that dresses should be sent home half made for completion by their destined wearer, but if dress is to be part of oneself, as it ought to be, milliners must be made to follow their client's individuality.

Pope Fashion is far too wise, far too liberal in his views, to deny extension of privilege to those who know how to use it.

It is perfectly possible for a woman to be everything that is *pechutt* and yet retain her personality, and if people would only realize this we should be spared the frequent shocks which meet us in the metamorphoses of girls, picturesquely pretty in Gainsborough hats, into fashionable, but hideous, females with frizzled toupees, or of some neat Diana of the hunting field, into an æsthetic damsel, clad in sad coloured and clinging raiment, which conceals her figure and robs her of all charm.

To their coiffure, women frequently make sacrifices sublime in silliness. A frizzled toupee fits some fashionable little face well enough, but from statuesque profiles it robs all character. How often do we see lovely Madonna-like faces marring their beauty with distorted halos of this burnt-up hair! Women seem incapable of recognizing that they are not all made on the same model, unless indeed some of them aim at acting foil to the others. Few however do this intentionally, although crowds fill the rôle unconsciously. A shapely head, large at the back, is greatly improved by having the hair piled on its very apex, if the neck is round, un wrinkled, and well set on, that is to say; but oh! how terrible are the skinny flat-headed women who, scraping their hair straight upward, disclose necks whose scragginess makes one shudder. If they only knew what a protection and ornament plaits and coils worn low are to the thin, they would leave the top of their heads uncrowned.

Fat people, on the contrary, can almost produce an appearance of banting, by judicious raising and narrowing of their coiffure. Even the painful plumpness which draws no distinction betwixt cheek and chin may to some slight extent be disguised by this treatment.

That beauty shines most brightly "unadorned," I am disposed to doubt, but that plainness unadorned is plainness doubled, I am

certain. The saying that a woman wears a remarkable dress for one of two reasons, either to draw attention *to* her face, or to draw it *away* from it, is undoubtedly true, but the really wise plain woman appears as the personification of an elegance as much part of herself as a good horseman is part of his horse. She thus attains the truest individuality, for it is impossible to fancy her costume worn by another woman. Could a milliner but master and impart this truth, grateful posterity would inscribe upon her tombstone,

“ Quid Fœmina possit.”

A LIFE INTEREST.

By MRS. ALEXANDER,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOING O'T," "AT BAY," "BY WOMAN'S WIT,"
"MONA'S CHOICE," ETC.

CHAPTER XXII.

A COUNTERMARCH.

IT was quite dark when they reached the end of their journey. A thick mist further obscured the little station and all around it—a mist which fell like the finest rain, soaking through wraps and stealing under umbrellas. A waggonette, drawn by a big rough-looking horse, and driven by a lad to whom the same description applied, awaited the travellers.

"The resources of my temporary establishment do not supply a covered trap, I am sorry to say," observed Ellis, as he assisted Marjory into the conveyance, and proceeded to cover her up with cloaks and rugs.

"It does not matter," she returned, and did not speak again till they arrived at their destination.

It seemed a long way, this silent drive through the soft darkness. Wearied, and chilled Marjory made no resistance when Ellis managed to put his arm round her and draw her close to him.

At length the driver stopped, got down and opened a gate; then she felt that they were going over a very rough road. Presently a sharp turn brought them opposite an open door, through which Marjory saw a hall partially lighted by a lamp, under which stood a tall, square-shouldered, grey-haired woman, shading her eyes from the light, the better to peer into the darkness, while the door was held open by a smiling, neat, almost lady-like-looking, red-haired lassie, about Marjory's own age. How her heart revived at the sight of the women. With them there was some chance of safety—of help—if need be.

"We are rather late," said Ellis, "and I fear Miss Acland is terribly tired. Mrs. Morrison, pray take her to her room, and see that the fire is good; then let us have dinner."

"I am sure the young lady is real welcome; she does look very white and wearied. Come this way, mem. Jessie, you see that the luggage is ta'en up as sune as the cart comes. This is my second daughter, mem, and she will be glad to help you any way

she can, as we all will, for I am sure Mr. Ellis is just a real gentleman, and I wish you and him great happiness."

Speaking volubly, Mrs. Morrison led her young guest up a short, broad oaken stair to a dim lobby, and, throwing open a door, ushered her into a large bedroom, comfortably but plainly furnished, and brightened by the glow of a blazing fire. "There, now," lighting the candles on the dressing-table, "let me help you off with your cloak. Wouldn't you like a glass of wine? though, for taking off the chill, there's nothing like a drop of whisky; but, maybe, you're no used to that."

"Thank you very much. I do not want anything," returned Marjory, overwhelmed at being treated as a bride-elect. What—what—would these people think of her?—coming there alone—such a long, long way with a lover—to be married, without a friend or relative to stand by her? "I am so cold and tired," she said in a broken voice, and then, in spite of herself, she burst into tears.

"Oh, my dear! this will never do. I am sure you ought to be a happy lady, for there never was a gentleman so careful to make everything ready for his sweetheart, and so feared that anything should happen to disappoint him. He'll just break his heart if he sees you crying like that. Come away and bathe your face and sit down, get a warm, and make your hair smooth; maybe you'll feel better after," placing an armchair in front of the fire. "There, sit ye down; Mr. Ellis is a grand gentleman, and does not like to be contradicted. He was maist always dinin' and shootin' with the earl and his great folk, but now they are all away in the Highlands, so not a soul about here need ken a word of what you are about, for not one of *us* will speak till Mr. Ellis lets us."

This speech was infinitely distressing to Marjory; every word was a separate sting. It assisted her, however, to recover herself. She must not talk to this good-natured gossip. "I am very stupid. It is fatigue, I suppose. I will bathe my face, and make myself fit to be seen."

"And that you are! a pleasure to see! The cart will be here directly, and then you'll have your things. Now, I'll just leave you. You ring the bell when you are ready, and Jessie will come and show you the way."

Thankful to be left alone, Marjory did her best to wash away the traces of her tears. It would be too unkind to Ellis to appear before him as if overwhelmed with grief on the eve of their union. But as the awful moment drew near, it was appalling to feel her reluctance, her dread increase. Why did she ever leave her father's house? Why did she allow herself to be over-persuaded into what she disapproved? If she could but be transported back to the desolate schoolroom and her stepmother's severities, it would be heaven compared to her present state of mind. Then she could honestly ask for sympathy in her troubles and griev-

ances. Now, whatever sorrow might befall her, it would all be brought on by her own action.

She was drawn from this painful turmoil of thought by a tap at the door, which opened to admit Jessie, followed by the rough-looking lad carrying her box.

"If you are ready I'll show you the way to the parlour," said Jessie, who looked radiant, as she evidently thought was suited to the happy occasion. "The dinner is ready."

"In a moment," returned Marjory, putting a few final touches to her toilette; then she followed her guide with outward composure but profound mental disturbance. Even while telling herself that nothing could deliver her from the imperative necessity of wedding Ellis, the prophetic power of strong emotion impressed her with an unreasoning conviction that the struggle must end by successful resistance to the destiny she dreaded.

Downstairs again, through a long cold passage, Jessie led her to a room panelled in oak, with deep red curtains, comfortable leather chairs, a faded turkey carpet and a glowing fire.

A lamp on the dinner table and wax candles on the chimney-piece only partially illumined it.

Ellis, who was standing by the fire, came forward to meet her eagerly, full of solicitude and inquiries.

Dinner was brought in immediately, and the attendance of a tidy servant girl, aided at intervals by Jessie herself, relieved Marjory from the first awkwardness of a *tête-à-tête*.

Ellis, always self-possessed and equal to the occasion, covered his companion's silence by giving her some account of the place, of how he came to know it and to hire the shooting; how, also, he had been laid up with a sprained ankle two years before, and what an excellent nurse Mrs. Morrison had been.

Marjory forced herself to make monosyllabic replies. She felt that Ellis' keen eyes were looking her through and through, that he divined her profound uneasiness, and that he would probably take some decisive step to put an end to it.

As soon as the cloth was removed and they were left to themselves Ellis made Marjory write a post-card announcing her safe arrival, and promising a letter in a few days when the family had removed to Edinburgh. He then asked her to draw nearer the fire. She stood up and approached it.

"Dearest," he said, putting his arm round her and drawing her gently to him, "it distresses me to see your suppressed agitation. You are infinitely plucky. I cannot say how I admire the courage with which you bear up, when another girl—most girls—would give way to hysterics. Let us cut short this uncomfortable transition state; once you are irrevocably my wife you will be calmer and more at rest. As I told you, a marriage in Scotland requires only the declaration of the parties that they take each other as husband and wife before two

witnesses. Let me call up Mrs. Morrison and her son ; they are quite prepared. I have explained to them the object of our journey here. I have the wedding ring," he took it from his pocket, "and in a few minutes we shall be bound to each other for life."

"What ! now, here, this evening ?" exclaimed Marjory, growing crimson first and then deadly white. "No, no, no ; that is quite impossible !"

"Why ? Marriage was the object of our journey here, and the sooner it is accomplished the better for you especially."

There was an indescribable tone of mastery in his voice which thrilled Marjory with terror, but she struggled to be composed and firm.

"Such haste is unbecoming," she said ; "it would seem strange to the people of the house, though, indeed, it must *all* seem strange. Besides, there is no clergyman ; and to be married without a clergyman is *too* heathenish. Do not ask me to consent to anything so repugnant."

She had drawn away from him as she spoke. A frown knit his brow for an instant, but he quickly banished it and said in a carefully softened tone :

"My dear love, is it not foolish to stick at a trifle now, when you have gone so far ? I explained the nature of a Scotch marriage to you, and the advantages it possessed for persons in our position ; you seemed to understand, and made no objection to it."

"I never understood there was to be no clergyman. I knew we were not to be married in church ; I understood that there were to be two witnesses, but I thought a clergyman would certainly be here to give us a blessing."

"But, Marjory, there is no minister within five or six miles. It is impossible to fetch him this evening."

"Of course it is ; but there is really no need for hurry. Besides——"

"My dearest child," he interrupted, "you do not understand ; be guided by me. I am acting for the best ; I cannot listen to your scruples, they are weak and unworthy of you. I am now your protector, and my will ought to have weight with you. I am ready to take all responsibility. I must *insist* on having my own way in this."

He stretched out his hand to the bell-rope. There was such resolution and authority in his voice and look that Marjory quailed. It was only for a second, gathering up her forces by a supreme effort, she laid her trembling fingers on his arm.

"Stop !" she cried, "I am *quite* determined not to be married except by a clergyman."

Ellis let his hand drop and his face grew hard ; they stood looking at each other in silence. "If we are already so opposed in idea,"

resumed Marjory in an unsteady voice, which grew firmer as she proceeded, "it would be wiser *not* to unite ourselves irrevocably. I have been weak in allowing you to over-rule my deep repugnance to a secret marriage,—now that I have gone so far my dread of it, of all the difficulties it may lead to, increases every moment. I do beseech you, Mr. Ellis, do not persist—let us stop—before it is too late."

Ellis had gazed at her intently while she spoke. "It *is* too late," he returned with a harsh laugh. "Do you not see the absurdity of your own proposition? Suppose I were willing to give you up, after risking so much to win you, losing sight of principles that have hitherto guided me, after scheming, lying for your sake, how are *you* to extricate yourself? How account for your return?—would you venture on an avowal of your experimental trip with me? You *must* know enough of life to be aware that such an incident would not be to your credit—in the eyes of the strait-laced."

Marjory coloured to the roots of her hair—her throat and ears were dyed with the vivid blush his words evoked—while she quivered as if a blow had been dealt her. "Better risk *anything* than life-long regret," she said with the courage of indignation. "I could write to my stepmother and say that the place and the people were not what I like, and return home."

Ellis looked at her with a moment's hesitation, then walked the length of the room and back; stopping opposite her he said in a softer tone, "No, Marjory, you could *not* face such an ordeal as that; moreover I cannot part with you. I do not suppose you have the faintest notion how cruel you are; I am half inclined to wish I had never seen you. Why don't you love me? Why do I love you? I cannot answer either question. Sweet Marjory, be kind to me and to yourself—if you leave me now—if you return as Marjory Acland to your father's house, I tell you, you do not know the consequences of your own act. I cannot explain."

"I am deeply, deeply grieved—I am ashamed of myself," cried Marjory, struggling with the sobs that would rise in her throat. "If you are really so fond of me I will wait for you as long as you like—until you think it prudent to marry; I will never look at any one else, never, I promise. Wouldn't that do?"—beseechingly, yet a little more calmly.

"No! you strange, incomprehensible, charming girl," cried Ellis. "It will *not* do! Let you leave me now?—on the very brink of the happiness I have longed for, and dared so much to win? What do you think I am made of? You force me to be *almost* brutal. Put all these follies out of your mind; accept the destiny you agreed to yesterday—and be my wife; for by heaven or hell, whichever is the most appropriate oath," he added with a sneer at his own unusual energy of speech, "I will *not* let you go."

Marjory shrunk as if he had struck her. She did not speak—she stood quite still—one hand pressed on her heart, her

reproachful, entreating eyes fixed upon his face. Her brain was in a whirl, but through all the dire confusion of thought and feeling a voice—not her own—seemed repeating in her inmost heart, “I will not stay; I will not stay.”

Again Ellis took a turn to and fro, then, pausing beside Marjory, who stood by the fire, he exclaimed: “I hope this is the last unpleasantness before we start on our honeymoon. I daresay you think me anything but chivalrous. Believe me, I am not a bad fellow. I will love and cherish you as much as the most psalm-singing professor of proprieties could, possibly more; but there are a few points on which I will *not* bear opposition. I am willing to yield to your whim about having a clergyman to marry us; it involves a foolish delay, but I wish to please you as far as I can. Tomorrow morning I shall send early to catch the nearest minister.”

Marjory bent her head in silence; she resolved with instinctive prudence not to commit herself by further speech; she wanted to go away to think in solitude.

She put her hand to her head and murmured that she was “awfully weary.”

“I daresay you are, poor child,” said Ellis compassionately. “I will explain matters to Mrs. Morrison and get information respecting the minister. Meantime you had better go and rest. I daresay you will be glad to be alone. I will send Jessie to you. Good-night, my love. Do not think unkindly of me. Remember that you have virtually given yourself to me by your acceptance of my scheme.” He drew her to him and softly kissed her eyes, instantly releasing her when she strove to free herself. He walked to the door, paused, looked at her, and went out. “I think I have made her understand,” he mused as he went in search of Mrs. Morrison, “that resistance is useless. It would indeed be a *fiasco* were she to escape me *now*. But though she is plucky enough, she dare not leave me; besides, she does not like to wound me. I do not think she will give me much trouble in future.”

Marjory threw herself into a large chair and covered her face with her hands. She was terribly in the power of this resolute and unscrupulous man. How unscrupulous the bold ingenious plot by which he managed to withdraw her from her father’s house proved. Would to God she were back there! Ellis might be kind, but, oh! he could be cruel; she was sure he could. “What shall I do? What shall I do?”

“Mr. Ellis said you wanted me.” Jessie interrupted her with these words.

“Oh! yes, thank you; I want to go to bed, I have a headache.”

“Well, it is full half-nine, and how people can sit up late I cannot think; they can’t have much to do in the day. I’ve just been hunting my little brother away to his bed; he’d read his book far into the night if he were let.”

"I am sorry to trouble you, but I don't think I could find my way."

"Eh! I am proud to help you. And so we are not to have the wedding to-night?"

"Oh! no, it is far too late. You have a little brother, then." Marjory went on quickly to change the subject as she followed her guide down the dim passage which was but faintly lighted by the candle she held.

"Yes; the eldest and the youngest are lads, but wee Jammie is a cripple, poor fellow! and sadly spoiled."

"My pupil that was to have been," said Marjory to herself, thinking of the hopefulness with which she had answered the letters that lured her into her present trying position. How was it that yesterday the prospect of marrying Ellis did not seem by any means overwhelming or dreadful, whereas *now* it was appalling—a very nightmare of terrible anticipations? Finding no solution to this riddle she looked fearfully round her large gloomy chamber, and the immense necessity for self-control being removed, burst into a passion of tears and sobs.

Jessie shut the door in hot haste. "Preserve us!" she exclaimed. "He must not hear you take on that way; and the poor gentleman that delighted to get you safe away! Take a drop of water—you're just fairly done. No one will come here to disturb you. Well, if you can't stop I'll call my mother," and while Marjory continued to sob almost hysterically, though she tried hard to stop herself, Jessie ran to call her mother, who came as soon as she got rid of Ellis.

"And what's it all about, my lamb?" she asked, coming into the room, a phial of sal volatile in one hand and a bottle of whisky in the other.

"It is over fatigue and—and stupid nervousness," faltered Marjory, who was beginning to recover herself.

"Ay, ay! they do say this volatile stuff is composing, but I would try a sup of whisky and a little cold water—it's just fine for the nerves."

"Thank you very much; cold water will do—and then if I could get to sleep."

"Ay! that you will, tired as you are. I suppose you just had a few words about the minister. You'll excuse me if I am saying more than I ought; but it's bad to begin with contradictions. He's awful put out—I can see that—and ever since he began to talk of the young lady he was to bring he has been quite another creature. He is a proud, masterful man. You'll excuse me talking so free; but you are just a bit lassie, and I feel for you; but you ought na' to have stood out about a minister—it looked like doubting him, and there was Willie and me in our best clothes, just waiting to be called to be your witnesses—for Mr. Ellis had warned us to be ready—you'd have been tied up safe enough without a minister."

"Well, you see, *I* did not think so," murmured Marjory, not quite pleased with this freedom of speech.

"Anyhow," resumed Mrs. Morrison, placing her phial on the table and her whisky bottle on the floor. "The boy is to be away first thing in the morning to fetch Mr. Blair, who is the minister of Haggisburn—the nearest manse. He'll be here by ten o'clock," this with an air of encouragement.

"By ten o'clock," repeated Marjory faintly.

"Well, well, you are better now, my lammie, so I'll leave you to get your rest; would you like a night-light?"

"Yes, I should, and oh! Mrs. Morrison, if I am not asking too much, would your daughter mind sleeping with me to-night? The room is so large, and I feel so awfully strange and lonely."

"Ay! that she shall. I'll send her up in a few minutes. To-morrow is churning day and she'll have her hands full. Shall I unstrap your box?"

At last she left the room. It was an infinite comfort to Marjory to know she would not be alone in the silent watches of the night. She had rather taken a fancy to Jessie's bright honest face. Dare she trust her and try to gain her assistance towards the escape she meditated? No; it would be too rash. If the minister was to arrive at ten, what chance had she?

When at last her young companion and herself were safely locked in for the night, Marjory was calmer and able to think more clearly.

Jessie was still excited and talkative; such an event as a private marriage did not happen every day in their quiet house.

Neither of the girls were disposed to sleep.

"You're waking?" whispered Jessie, as Marjory lay watching the dancing shadows made by the fire-light.

"Yes."

"Well, for fear you should be put out and disappointed to-morrow, I may tell you it's my belief that Jack will no find the minister. I know Jean (that's the housekeeper at the manse) told our Maggie the minister was away to Glasgow for the christ'nin of his sister's bairn; but I wouldn't lose heart for that, —there's Mr. MacGuckin of Caldercleugh, he's like to be at home."

"And how far is he away?"

"Nigh ten miles up a hilly road."

"Indeed!"

"Oh! don't you fear; our brown mare would go there and back under the four hours even with a rest."

"What is that?" asked Marjory with a start, as a shrill, distant scream broke the silence.

"It's only the railway whistle, the wind must have gone round to the north-east; the line comes much nearer than the station, it bends round by the burn at the head of the wood."

"Does the railway go to Edinburgh?"

"Yes, it is only an hour-and-a-half by the quick train. Have you ever been in Edinburgh?"

"No."

"Eh—it's a grand town; but Mr. Ellis will be taking you there likely to-morrow."

"I suppose the train we came by to-day goes on to Edinburgh?"

"Yes; when we go we always take the seven-fifty, it gives a long day."

"That is dreadfully early."

"Ah! well, you see, there is not another till twelve forty-five, and that is a slow train, so we'd need to sleep in the town. You'll like to see Edinburgh?"

"Very much indeed. I have heard it is a beautiful city."

"You may say so. There's the Castle, and Scott's monument, and Holyrood, &c., &c." Jessie ran on awhile, but not receiving a reply, she stopped, thinking her companion was asleep. "Poor lassie," she thought. "She *did* take on. I wonder what she found to cry about, when she's going to marry a grand gentleman like Mr. Ellis, and he so fond of her? I wonder if she is a great heiress? anyway she has no jewellery," and Jessie gradually passed from conjecture into profound slumber.

Her companion, though keeping very still, was intensely awake. She was considering eagerly, painfully, her chance of escape.

If the clergyman first named by Jessie was at home and obeyed the summons, Marjory felt that she *could* not for very shame refuse to go through the ceremony of marriage. She could not so cruelly disappoint and insult Ellis as to reject him in the face of the man he had brought to unite them. No. It would be braver and more honest to stand to her deeper convictions in the face of all difficulties, but she knew she had not courage to do this. Then where should she drift? to be the suppressed wife of a man she did not love, whom she would disappoint, and disappointed, Ellis could and would be cruel! she felt it,—she knew it by the prophetic instinct of a sensitive nature. If she could only get away unseen when Ellis was occupied elsewhere,—it would be cowardly, even base, but she would do it. It would be better for both of them in the end. As to arriving at any decision, that was impossible; she had not even the will to decide. So she worked wearily round and round the same circle of thoughts, diversified by miserable conjectures as to what was to become of her *after*—by mental counting up of the money she had in her purse, just enough to take her home, and by repeating over to herself Dick's address in Edinburgh. If, oh! if she could take shelter with him! Should she ever accomplish it?

When undressing, Marjory had found the letter she received yesterday. Was it yesterday or two years ago? and reading it over a gleam of hope came to her with the idea of Dick being

within reach; painful as it would be to make such a confession, she *could* tell him anything. At last, when night was nearly over, she fell asleep from exhaustion, and slept profoundly, dreamlessly.

* * * * *

It was broad daylight when she woke, and Jessie stood by her bed with a cup of tea, which Marjory found very refreshing. Having replied to the girl's kindly inquiries as to how she felt, Marjory could not force herself to say more; the subject on which she would fain have had information was too tremendously important. Her eyes no doubt spoke for her, as Jessie said with a smile, "Indeed I have no news for you yet; Jock did not get away till near nine; my brother said it was no use disturbing the minister before his breakfast. He'll be back soon, though, for it's near ten now. Will you get up to your breakfast, or shall I bring it here?"

"I have a shocking headache, Jessie," returned Marjory, resolved, if possible, to avoid seeing Ellis till the last moment; "I think I shall keep quiet here."

"Ay! do," said Jessie sympathetically; and taking the empty cup she left the room.

While Marjory, whose complaint of headache was fully justified, was trying to arrange her thoughts and praying earnestly for help and guidance, Mrs. Morrison came in with a note in her hand.

"I *am* sorry," she exclaimed, sitting down by the bedside; "but Mr. Baird is away to Glasgow, so you must just wait for the minister of Caldercleugh—and he cannot be here before the afternoon. Mr. Ellis is wearying to know how you are; there's a note from him."

Marjory opened and read as follows, while Mrs. Morrison very deliberately studied her face:

"It is most unfortunate, dearest, that the minister nearest at hand is absent. I am just starting in search of another at some distance, thinking that if I do not appear in person he might decline to undertake a long drive for so small a motive. Possibly reflection and daylight may have presented a different view of matters from what you entertained last night? If so, tell me; and we can carry out my original plan. I trust you are calmer, and refreshed by a night's rest. Will you not see me before I start? and *must* I start at all? Ever your devoted—R. V. E."

In reply Marjory hastily wrote:

"I cannot come round to *your* views. I *do* wish you would agree to mine. Forgive all the trouble I cause you. I cannot see you just now."

"You will give that to Mr. Ellis?"

"Yes; and he is looking awful bad. I don't think he has closed an eye all night. And now he is just going off to Caldercleugh to fetch Mr. MacGuckin; he is ready to do anything to please you. Indeed, and you may be a proud lady."

"Oh! yes; I daresay I ought to be," cried Marjory, dying to get rid of her hostess, her invention strung to sudden life and activity by this scarce expected turn of affairs.

"And what would you like for your breakfast?"

"Anything—nothing. I have had a cup of tea; that is enough."

"Indeed, an' it's not; you must any way have a new-laid egg and some cream scones."

"I assure you I do not want anything. Please take that note to Mr. Ellis."

Directly she was alone Marjory rose and began to dress. She had eagerly leaped to the conclusion she dared not attempt to reach the night before. It would be one o'clock before Ellis could possibly return; by that time she must have eluded Mrs. Morrison and her daughter; have reached Strathlogan, and be on the road to Edinburgh—to deliverance. It was base, perhaps cruel to Ellis; but she could not help it,—it was a question of life or death to her.

"Eh! but you are looking another woman," cried Mrs. Morrison, who had tapped for admission, and now entered bearing a tray on which reposed the good things she had prescribed.

"Well, that poor gentleman is away," she continued, evidently considering Ellis an ill-treated, long-suffering lover. "But he'll be right glad to find a bright, bonnie bride awaiting him. I'll have a nice bit of lunch ready as soon as he and the minister come back. Mr. MacGuckin's a learned man I'm told, and a soond classical scholar, but he likes a good dinner for a' that; then you can be married and a', in time for the evening train to Edinburgh; at least I believe that's where you're going."

"Yes; to Edinburgh," repeated Marjory.

"There, now, try and eat a bit, and when you ring Jessie will come and help to sort ye."

Left alone, Marjory tried to steady her nerves; she finished dressing, and made up a small parcel of necessaries which she could easily carry under her rain cloak; she re-arranged and carefully locked her box; she counted her money. Then she rang, and awaited the appearance of Jessie, who escorted her to the room where she had dined the day before.

It had evidently been Ellis' sitting-room. Books, pamphlets, newspapers and writing materials gave an inhabited aspect. A large square projecting window looked out over a wide stretch of undulating country to the right, a plantation of some extent sheltered the house on the north-east.

It was a clear, dry, grey day, and Marjory felt that decision had

given her strength and courage. How to evade the people of the house puzzled her. How to find her way was another difficulty.

"What a fine view," she observed, walking over to the window. "It was so dark and wet last night I could not see anything."

"Oh, it's fine and open, and away over the hill there's a grand moor just full of birds."

"Which way has Mr. Ellis gone?"

"Over the upland before you and across a corner of the moor. I am glad it's still, for it's a bitter cold drive on a windy day."

"Is that the road we came by last night?"

"Oh no! As soon as you pass the wood and out of the gate you turn to the left and follow the road along the hollow; that's the road you came last night, and may be you'll go back by to-day if you take the train to Edinburgh. If I hadn't to attend to the butter I would take you out for a turn to see the place, but mother is in a hurry, she wants it finished off before dinner."

"Oh, do not mind me. I shall find a book. Indeed, my head still aches. As soon as my room is ready I will go and lie down and get a little sleep."

"That's right. I'll make Maggie do it at once. Then I'll come and call you, for you'll likely be wanting to put on another gown."

"Thank you. And where is the dairy? I should like to see the dairy later."

"It's right at the other end of the house, by the kitchen and the farmyard" (she pointed to the left). "You'll not be frightened if the house is still, for no one will come to disturb you."

"No. I shall be glad to be quiet."

"There's mother calling me. You ring if you want anything." She hurried away.

Marjory stood in deep thought, marshalling the facts she had ascertained; first, the 12.45 Edinburgh train stopped at Strathlogan; next, she had learned the way. Lastly, the family would all be engaged for some hours at the other side of the house—chance favoured her. She stole noiselessly into the hall to consult the clock. She would give herself an hour and a half to accomplish the two miles and a "bit." Once outside the gate, no one would recognize her. But oh! that long, lonely walk. She would not think more of its terrors. Now was the moment for action, if she missed it she would be lost.

She carefully folded up the sparkling ring, which she had worn scarce twenty-four hours, in paper and inclosed it with a few words in an envelope addressed to Ellis:

"I am behaving badly to you, I know," she wrote, "and I most humbly ask your forgiveness. I *cannot* marry you. Hereafter

you will be thankful I did not. I will write in a day or two and tell you where I am. Trust me not to betray you to any one. Again I beg you to forgive me. I can hardly forgive myself.—**MARJORY.**”

This she left on the chimney-piece when she had dressed and thrown her rain cloak over the parcel she carried. Then she locked the door of her room and placed the key under the letter.

“If they come and find the door locked, they will think I am asleep and not look for me; though no one has a right to stop me.”

All was profoundly still. The front door was open, as it usually is in country houses. She ventured forth. Not a creature was to be seen. She stole past the corner of the house, and keeping in the shelter of the wood, followed a road which ran beside it till she reached the gate, when she turned to the left and walked as swiftly as her quick-throbbing heart would allow towards the station and liberty. Of the gloomy, forbidding aspect of the distant future, she did not allow herself to think.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STORM STAYED.

OF the three young creatures over whom Mrs. Acland had exercised so evil an influence, the one least injured by it was her own son. This was not owing to any good-will on his mother's side.

Her cruel insinuation that he had been guilty of theft had gone no further than their family circle, save to old Mr. Cross, in whom Dick had confided. He had escaped from his mother's oppressive presence, from a profession he disliked to congenial work, and, after the first year of hard struggle, to sympathetic companionship.

From the time he encountered Brand fortune had smiled upon him. He was singularly attracted to his father's old comrade, and felt bound to him by more than gratitude, by the keenest sympathy, by a subtle harmony of nature which underlay considerable difference of opinion.

But though they had been in close communication for several months, and Brand talked frankly on most topics, Dick was completely ignorant of his previous life. As to his past career, Brand never uttered a syllable, and seeing that he did not wish to speak on the subject, Dick avoided it with equal care. They suited each other admirably, and the elder man revealed, in conversation with his young companion, some literary and much worldly knowledge, which he kept to himself in his intercourse with ordinary acquaintances.

When Dick readily obeyed his summons, he was shocked to

find Brand looking **extremely** ill, suffering from severe neuralgic pains and **terribly** depressed in spirits, the results of a bad cold.

"I feel **better** already," said Brand next day, after a long talk about the work on which he was engaged and the particular portion of it in which Dick could assist him. "I have grown **suddenly** anxious to live. Two years ago, if any one told me that I would try to stay upon the stage instead of accepting the very first opportunity of making my exit, I should have laughed at the idea. But so it is."

"Then I have no doubt you'll pull yourself together," said Dick. "I think 'will' has something to do with recovery. It's a good sign your taking a relish for life again."

"It isn't a relish," said Brand thoughtfully; "it is an interest. I fancy I can be of some use to *you* in the next two years."

"You have been of the greatest use already," returned Dick, a good deal touched by the quiet earnestness of his manner. "Where should I have been if I had not fallen in with you?"

"I think I have been a help to you. But you would have got on without me; you have some of the qualities which insure success. I particularly want to do this job of Lord Beaulieu's in France; it will be a great thing for you. I shall leave as much as I can to you, and it will make you known to a good set of people. Then the climate will suit me. I love the south of France and Italy. That's the reason I want to finish my present undertaking. This is a cruel climate, and it's not so pleasant working for Sir Peter Tulloch as for Lord Beaulieu, who was himself an artist; so you must push the men on."

The scene of their labours was a few miles out of Edinburgh, and Dick went there early each day by train, returning when evening closed in. The first morning Brand accompanied him and explained all the details he wished to carry out. After, he was very irregular, sometimes keeping indoors all day, though certainly better and more cheerful.

The first four or five days were especially pleasant to Dick Cranston. His work interested him; he had a pride in carrying out Brand's plans, while the return to a cosy, cheerful evening, a thoughtful book and a pipe, or a rambling, confidential talk with Brand about art or politics, made the hours fly fast.

Sometimes conversation turned on the Acland family. Brand was always interested in them. He was concerned to hear that Marjory was going to leave her home.

"She's not the stuff to make a governess of," he said. "It is true I only spoke to her once. I saw her again at Beaulieu, when she did not see me. But from what you tell me, as well as the little I saw that evening, I should say she's not the stuff to make a governess of; she is not mechanical enough. Why, every thought speaks out in her face. She is the making of a charming

woman, or I am much mistaken. I wish she were happily married. It is possible she may throw herself away on some worthless fellow; girls who have unhappy homes often do, and she is an attractive creature." Brand sighed.

"Poor Marge! I *should* be sorry if anything went wrong with Marge; she can be *so* miserable and *so* joyous. Then she is as true as steel."

"A rare quality in man or woman. But there has not been much to try her as yet."

"Small things show the disposition," rejoined Dick.

The day after this conversation Dick returned rather earlier than usual, feeling somewhat tired and looking forward to his evening with quiet pleasure. He let himself in with a latch-key, and turned into their sitting-room, expecting to find Brand beside the fire. To his amazement a lady occupied his armchair. Dick, with a feeling of bewilderment, mechanically closed the door. At the sound the lady started up and flew to him with outstretched arms, which she threw round his neck.

It was Marjory—Marjory herself, deadly pale, her eyes looking large and strained, her lips quivering. "Oh, Dick! I thought you would never come. You *will* help me; you will not think me a wretch?"

"Marjory! Why, what has happened? Of course I'll do all I can for you. What has gone wrong?" He removed her arms gently from his neck, but held her hands tightly in his own.

"I have done wrong, Dick. I went away yesterday *with* Mr. Ellis from my father's house; to-day I have run away *from* him to—to you," and she laughed hysterically.

"Good God, Marjory!" exclaimed Dick, his own colour changing. "What have you done?"

"I have done wrong—very wrong—I tell you," she repeated feverishly. "It is a long story; you must listen patiently before you condemn me."

"You ran away with Ellis?" asked Dick, his face darkening, and gradually taking in the assertion which appalled him. "Then was your story about going to be a governess false?"

"No, no, Dick; I never told you a lie. I never told any one a lie. But I have *acted* one. Do not be angry with me. I have no friend in the world but you, Dick. Just hear what I have to tell."

"Sit down, Marge; why, you can scarcely stand. Yes, tell me everything."

He put her in the armchair again, and drew a chair beside her, his eyes eagerly fixed on her face as he devoured her words. She spoke low and quickly, but gave a clear account of her acquaintance with Ellis, of her amazement at his proposal; then of her return home, her illness, her unhappiness, the reappearance of Ellis, and the subsequent events. When she came to the miser-

able uncertainty, the terror and repugnance which grew upon her during the journey, and reached its highest pitch when she found herself away from every one she had ever known, in the lonely house at Strathlogan, she grasped Dick's hand in both hers, and bowed her head upon it; her voice was broken, but she shed no tears, the tension of waiting for his verdict was too great.

"So I got away and came here," she ended without looking up.

"Ellis is a scoundrel!" cried Dick; adding with a grim smile, "How awfully sold he must have been when he came back and found his bird flown."

"I am sorry for that too. Oh! I have behaved badly all round. You may not believe it, but Mr. Ellis *was* very fond of me; if he had asked my father, and married me openly, I might have grown fond of him: that was why I went away with him. No one else cared a straw for me, and *he* did; he did indeed."

"I believe it"—shortly—"but not in the right way. He should not have taken advantage of your unhappiness to induce you to do what he would have been ready to shoot another man for even mentioning to a sister of his own. I should enjoy horsewhipping the fellow."

"Don't abuse him. I have deceived him, and why should I punish him for my own weakness? Can you forgive me, Dick?"

"I have nothing to forgive, Marge. It was awfully foolish of you to listen to such a proposal, but I can understand the temptation. Thank God, you had resolution enough to come away. It makes me shiver to think what you have escaped. You must stay and rest here."

"And you will not let Mr. Ellis come here? You will not let him take me away?"

"Let him?" and Dick pressed her hands with such force that she could have cried out. "You are safe with me. I mean us, for I must speak to Brand; he is very wise."

"No, you must not," said Marjory firmly, as she withdrew her hands, looking straight into Dick's eyes as she spoke. "I will never betray Mr. Ellis to any one, except to you, because I *must*. If the story of his wishing to marry me came to Uncle Carteret's ears, it would ruin him. Indeed it would do him no good in any direction, and I will not harm him if I can help it."

"Marjory," indignantly, "I believe you love the brute."

"Love him? I almost wish I did. I should have trusted him then, and had a little bit of happiness, for a while at any rate, whatever came after. How can you say so, after all I have told you?"

"Girls are such strange creatures, they say; I know nothing of them."

"Well, that does not matter, only I will *not* have any one told about him; promise me, Dick, dear Dick."

"But I can't all at once, we must think what is best to do."

Anyway, Marge, I *am* glad to see you, though you look so white and worn, poor little Marge! Have they given you anything to eat or drink?"

"I want nothing, only to settle with you about going back, for"—with a shivering sigh and closing her eyes—"I have made up my mind to go back."

"What! to Falkland Terrace?"

"Yes. It will be awful, but I will do it."

"And face my mother? Why, she will never allow such a 'raw' to heal."

"I deserve some punishment for so—so wild, so dreadful an act as running away with a comparative stranger. Oh Dick, I am so overwhelmed with shame when I think of it. I will bear *every*-thing the best way I can. I intend writing to Mrs. Acland that the place is unsuitable, intolerable, and return the day after I write. You see, they know at home that I was to come into Edinburgh with Mrs. Morrison, so *far* that is provided for; for the rest, I shall say I was *uncomfortable*, and explain nothing. Oh! I can hold my *tongue* if I choose. Then I will teach Louise, and *try and make up* for my haste and imprudence. I shall be more patient because I know I do not deserve ——"

"You are a thousand times too good for them—for any of us," interrupted Dick, infinitely touched by her humility. "What chance had your inexperience against the scheming of a villain like Ellis?"

"You must not abuse him. I ought to have had sense enough to judge, and"—growing crimson—"my womanly instincts ought to have kept me from listening to what I knew was wrong. I do not want to shirk my own responsibility. But do you not see, Dick, that the least said about such an affair the better? Promise me you will not tell Mr. Brand."

"Perhaps it would be better not. If you have the courage to face going back,—why, it is the best thing you can do."

"Oh! I shall do it"—in a tone of despairing resolution—"all I ask is a sacred promise never to tell any one what I have confided to you. When George returns I may tell *him*. I cannot have a secret from him. Do you know the idea of deceiving you both held me back more than anything. Oh! it is such a relief to be with you, to tell you everything," and she laid her head against his shoulder.

Dick kept very still. "Thank God! you have escaped," he murmured. "I was always afraid of that fellow."

"Afraid of whom? Mr. Ellis?—why?"

"I don't know. He was always about with you."

"How do you know that?"

"Whenever you talked to me or wrote to me, you always mentioned being here or there with Ellis."

"Did I? Well, I used to dislike him."

"You don't dislike him *now*?"

"No; I could not dislike any one that seemed so fond of me; it would be ungrateful, Dick."

"He does not deserve much gratitude from you."

"No one else seemed to care much about me."

"Do George and I count for nothing?"

"No, no, but how little I shall ever see of you." She stopped abruptly, and there was a moment's silence.

"I must explain your appearance in some way to Brand," exclaimed Dick in a troubled voice.

"I have seen him—and explained myself," she returned. "When I came here, the old lady who opened the door did not seem inclined to let me in, even when I said I was your sister; then I asked for Mr. Brand, and she brought me in here. Mr. Brand was so astonished. He was very nice and kind. I tried to seem calm; I told him about finding the engagement I had undertaken *unsuitable*, and coming to you for help and advice; he said you would be in *about six*, and that both of you would be glad to help me in any way. Then he offered me tea; I could not take it, so he went to settle with the landlady *about a room* for me, I think, and I sat counting the moments till you came."

"It has been an awful business for you altogether," said Dick, after a moment's pause, "and I wish—I do wish, Marge—you had not to go back home."

"Oh! so do I. It seems more than I am able to face, but I must. It is my only way to escape—unless, indeed, Mr. Brand or any one could find me something to do here?"

"That, I fear, is out of the question. How long can you stay, Marge?"

"Till Monday or Tuesday. It would be too soon to seem to give up before. This is Thursday."

"Well, you must rest and gather courage—and then try for another engagement. I should feel happier if I knew you were out of the house—your father's house."

"I don't feel as if I should ever have heart or courage again," said Marjory.

"Perhaps old Carteret ——" Dick was beginning, when Brand opened the door and walked in, saying, "I hope I have left you long enough to discuss your affairs. Now I think it is high time Miss Acland had something to eat—she looks tired out. I have settled with Mrs. MacKibbin about a room for her as long as she chooses to honour us forlorn bachelors by staying here." He smiled in a kindly paternal fashion as he spoke.

"Thank you," cried Dick; "I have heard all my sister had to tell me, and think she was quite right in leaving the people she went to."

"What a shame to drag her all this way north—for nothing,"

said Brand lightly. "Would you like to see your room before tea?"

Marjory gladly accepted the suggestion, and, accompanied by the landlady, left her hosts with a whispered reminder of his promise to Dick.

"She has had a start?" said Brand interrogatively.

"Yes; she came in for rather an unpleasant affair, but she has insisted on my promising to keep the thing secret."

"Oh! very well. Least said soonest mended is often the case; the sooner she is safe at home the better."

"I wish she hadn't to go there," cried Dick, who was leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece, and his head on his hand in a despondent attitude. "It is too bad that a slight, tender little creature like that, who is all fire and feeling, should be driven into a corner and obliged to escape from her father's house as if from prison."

"Ay!" returned Brand, lighting a cigarette, "life is desperately hard on some women. Your sister won't mind my smoking?"

"No; she used not to object to a pipe, unless she was *very* cross with us."

"The worst is," continued Brand, "that it's the best women who generally, indeed almost always, go to the wall. I've seen the hard, selfish ones, the cool heads, whose adamant natures are sheathed in the velvety soft-seeming of exterior timidity and shrinking, clinging, flattering helplessness, ride over the roughest waves to success and prosperity. This poor young thing is the right sort. When she came in here to-day I could see she had had a great shock of some sort. Oh! I don't want to know what it was. I could be no help to her; but she pulled herself together as pluckily, as if she had a man's spirit in that slender frame of hers. What a fine pair of eyes she has! Gad! if I had a daughter like that I would never let her out of my sight, and I'd work my soul out to make her comfortable. I am a tolerably keen observer now, after having been taken in often enough, and I'd be thankful for a daughter like her," pointing to the door with the cigarette which he took from his mouth.

Dick's eyes lit up with pleasure as he listened to this eulogium, and the sweet grave smile which was peculiar to him parted his lips, showing his white teeth under the soft golden-brown moustache which had grown so thickly since he had parted with Marjory on the miserable day when he went forth to the battle of life. "Yes, Marge is wonderfully plucky; I wish we could keep her with us—she looks awfully cut up."

The entrance of a raw-looking Highland servant girl with wild black hair, who proceeded with a good deal of clatter to lay the table, interrupted their conversation, and Dick left the room.

When Marjory joined them, she was looking more cheerful and

composed, a grateful sense of the rest and security soothed her; she was satisfied that she had done wisely—if not for Ellis, certainly for herself—ay! for him too. It was such a blessed relief, too, to have no barrier of concealment between herself and Dick; then she was with kind, frank friends, and free from all the horrible, painful embarrassment of expressive looks and love-making.

"Come, my dear Miss Acland," said Brand, placing a chair for her, "you must, if not too tired, pour out tea. It is no end of a treat to see a young lady pour out tea. A tea-pot without a woman to preside over it is only a melancholy reminder of past joys and privileges. Dick will lose his manners if he goes on always *tête-à-tête* with a miserable worn-out old misanthrope like myself."

"I am sure you are no misanthrope, Mr. Brand," said Marjory, looking kindly into his dark, sleepy, smiling eyes, "or I should not feel so much at home with you. I fancy your misanthropy is all for yourself. Do you take sugar?"

She assumed the duties of administering tea with a pretty air of unaffected readiness, surprised at her own composure after the trials and emotions of the last twenty-four hours.

Brand did most of the talking. He insisted with kindly authority on his young guest eating some of the grouse which furnished their evening meal; he talked of the beauty and historic interest of Edinburgh, and promised to show her some of the principal lions on the following day. Marjory, though she listened well pleased, said very little, and soon after the table was cleared bid them good-night. "I feel as if I could sleep day and night," she said; "I never was so tired before."

"You must not get up till all hours to-morrow," returned Dick, who had come out with her into the hall to light her candle.

"I suppose you go away early?"

"Yes; at half-past eight."

"Then, Dick, I shall not see you before you go; and I *must* write to Mr. Ellis. I must, indeed," this in a very low tone.

"Why? I do not see the necessity."

"But I promised; and it would leave him in such cruel perplexity if he did not know what became of me. Oh! I must write, Dick. I will show you what I have written."

"If you must, you must," said Dick gloomily.

"You are not to be cross to me, for I cannot bear it," slipping her arm through his and pressing against him.

Dick, looking down gravely and kindly into her eyes, murmured: "I never am cross to you, Marjory. Good-night. I trust you will rest well, little Marge."

"All the same—he *was* a little cross," thought Marjory, as she went upstairs to her room; "or perhaps it is that boys can't bear to be cuddled."

A delicious sense of security enabled Marjory to enjoy to the

full a night of profound sleep, which she sorely needed. Her wakening, therefore, after a moment of puzzled confusion, naturally brought her renewed courage and clearer thought.

She had made a terrible mistake. She had very nearly let herself be persuaded into doing what she knew to be wrong; but she need not allow this painful memory to overshadow her always. She would try to be wise and good and prudent, and so in some measure atone for her rash error. Above all, she was anxious to write to Ellis and acquaint him with her plans. She would like to finish with him clearly and distinctly.

As soon as she had dressed and breakfasted, finding that both Brand and Dick had gone out, she settled herself to write her letter. Many were the attempts she made, the notes she tore up, and she was but ill-pleased with what she finally wrote:

"I am staying here with my brother Dick," so ran her brief epistle; "on Monday I shall write to my stepmother, and say that I cannot remain with Mrs. Morrison, as I am unhappy and uncomfortable. On Tuesday I shall follow my letter before Mrs. A—— can answer it. No one, therefore, need ever know that you were with me, except Dick. I was obliged to tell him, but he has promised to keep the secret, and you *may* trust him. Now I want you to forgive me. I know I do not deserve that you should, but I shall be miserable if you do not. Had I only had the strength of mind to say 'No,' and stick to it, neither you nor I should have been in this uncomfortable position; so, believe me, I am very, very sorry. Write me a little word, and then we had better never hear of or see each other again. I am grieved to say good-bye thus, but you will forgive me and forget me, will you not?—M. A."

Poor Marjory shed some tears over this disjointed epistle, and put up an earnest prayer that she might never see his face again.

Faithful to her promise, she put the letter unclosed in her pocket, ready for Dick's inspection, and then she spent some time gazing out of the window, vaguely watching the scanty traffic and wondering at the steepness of the street.

She was calmer and braver than the day before, but not yet able to give her attention to a book. Presently, with a thrill of delight, she recognized Dick Cranston at the opposite side of the street. He seemed taller and broader and more important-looking than when he shared the light and shade of life in Falkland Terrace. Could she have ever dreamed that the despised "monster" would turn out so handsome a man? for there was nothing of the boy about him now.

"Brand let me off early," said Dick a few minutes later, coming quickly into the room. "He thought you would be lonely. We'll ask Mrs. McKibbin for some luncheon, and then take a walk into the old town. It is well worth seeing."

"How good of him; how good you both are, to a sinner like me!" cried Marjory, with one of her old bright smiles. "I do not deserve it, but then Mr. Brand does not know."

"No; and never shall through me. I believe you are right, Marge; this affair ought to be kept a secret."

"Will you look at my letter?" she asked timidly.

"I scarcely like to do so, yet perhaps I ought."

Marjory handed it to him, and he read it through slowly.

"He is getting off far too easy," he said, returning it to her. "I hope he will trouble you no more. To-morrow Brand will come back early to keep you company, and so you shall not be much alone."

Next morning, when her kind hosts left her, Marjory tried to read some of the books and magazines, a good supply of which lay about, but found that the restless uneasiness of yesterday had returned to gnaw her heart. How unwise, how precipitate she had been! and what terrible retribution awaited her in her return to her stepmother's rule. "Oh, if Mrs. Acland only *knew*, what bitter use she would make of her knowledge."

No, she could not read, so she set to work to put the room in order and arrange the books. She was even meditating asking for a duster, when the Highland lassie suddenly flung the door open and said, "Here's a gentleman for you, mem." For an instant Marjory felt blind and dizzy; then she saw all too clearly that she was face to face with Ellis.

How white and stern he looked, as he stood silently gazing at her. Marjory unconsciously clasped her hands and waited for his words. She could not have spoken to save her life.

"I am not surprised that you find my presence somewhat painful and oppressive," said Ellis at last with a bitter laugh. "Few lovers have ever been so neatly tricked. I congratulate you on your power of keeping your own counsel, of making your clever plans. Of course, I had no notion you had cover so near at hand."

"I have no right to quarrel with anything you choose to say," returned Marjory sadly and humbly; "but, remember, I begged you, even at the last moment, to give up the marriage—to think well before you committed yourself irrevocably. Was it not better to run away, rather than let you marry a woman who did not, could not love you?"

"Why could you not love me, Marjory?" said Ellis, advancing a few steps.

"I may answer by asking, Why did you love me? We cannot help ourselves. I am most unhappy when I think of having given you pain; but you will soon see that we are better apart. You will soon forget me."

"Never!" cried Ellis in a harsh tone, "never, Marjory. You have stamped the impression of yourself and your desertion too

cruelly deep upon my soul. I wonder you did not fear rousing the enmity of the man you cheated so basely."

"Not so basely, Mr. Ellis," pleaded Marjory. "I never pretended I was in love with you."

"You promised to be my wife. Can you deny it?" Marjory drooped her head in silence. "However," resumed Ellis, "I did not come here to waste time in useless reproaches. From first to last, Marjory, you are the one weakness of my life. You have cost me what you can never repay. Now I want you to tell me clearly and truly what your intentions are."

"I have told you already. I cannot venture to return before Tuesday or Wednesday next; but I shall go home."

"Where I do not imagine you will have a very good time," replied Ellis. "What would Mrs. Acland say if she had an inkling of the truth? For that matter, what would *any one* say?"

"She need never know," cried Marjory, stung to self-assertion by his jeering tone, "unless *you* tell her; and from what you have said I imagine you would be as little disposed to betray the secret as myself."

"I am not inclined to betray either you or myself," said Ellis. "But whatever happens, and wherever you go, Marjory, the existence of *that* secret is a tie between us you can never break. In travelling with me, in remaining under the same roof with me, you have put yourself in my power. I may never use the power; but I will not promise to refrain. How will your future lover or husband like to know that you escaped from your home, under false pretences, with a man whom you did not marry?"

"No, thank God!" exclaimed Marjory, fully roused. "Better face any fate than be tied to a man who can threaten as you do."

Ellis did not reply immediately; he walked to the door and returned.

"My natural indignation hurried me into too forcible expressions," he said. "You must, however, acknowledge you deserve little consideration at my hands. Yet I can never forget that I am a man of honour, that is your best safeguard. Still, I should like to pay the debt I owe you. I feel a curious mingling of passion with a longing for revenge, a tolerably devilish mixture, I admit."

"I am more and more convinced that I did well in leaving you," returned Marjory, who had completely recovered composure. "I regret, I always shall regret, that I was weak enough to be persuaded against my better judgment; and I shall never cease to repent having caused you pain. Even now, if I can atone to you in *any* way, except marrying you secretly, I will."

"You will?" repeated Ellis, and stood a moment or two in profound thought. "I accept your offer. You said you were willing to be engaged to me, to wait until circumstances permitted me to marry openly. This is the atonement I will accept. It will be

a long waiting, I warn you ; there will be considerable periods of separation ; but in spite of your strange conduct, Marjory, I *can* trust you. I think you will keep your word. Will you promise to be my wife when I can claim you ? ”

“ Is this your revenge ? ” asked Marjory, looking steadily at him, the vivid colour his appearance had called up fading away.

“ Nay ; it is the constancy of my affection. Don’t you see I can not bear the idea of losing you ; and would rather cling to a distant hope than give up all hope.”

“ Having treated you very badly, I suppose my conscience makes a coward of me, and I feel less ready to give you my promise than I was the other day.”

“ This is the only atonement I will accept, and I think I have a right to ask it.”

“ No doubt you have,” cried Marjory, rallying her forces. “ But, Mr. Ellis, be generous ; forgive me, blot out all this unhappy affair. I am no fit wife for a diplomat, a future ambassador. You, too, as time goes by, will find an indefinite engagement a mill-stone round your neck. Now you are angry, and with justice. You will be happier if you throw this anger off and let us part friends.”

She made a step towards him with a frank, winning smile and outstretched hand. Ellis grasped it hard.

“ You do not know me, Marjory. You shall not trick me out of my rights. You accepted me for your husband. You committed yourself by trusting yourself to me. Had the minister I first sent for, been at hand, you could not have escaped. You took a base advantage of my effort to meet *your* wishes to frustrate mine. Now I only ask the performance of your own proposition, to wait till I can marry you openly. Surely such unwavering constancy deserves some acknowledgment.”

“ Let go my hand, Mr. Ellis ; you hurt me,” said Marjory faintly. “ If I thought you really loved me, that you had not some idea of revenge in what you ask——”

“ Love you,” he cried, walking restlessly to and fro, “ I never loved you more passionately ; never felt more eager to call you mine. Sweetest Marjory, you are a rare woman, or promise to be one with your tenderness and resolution. You have wrung my heart ; will you not heal it ? ”

“ If, indeed, I can atone to you,” she said falteringly, “ why, I ought to give you my promise—a promise, perhaps, you will never claim.”

“ Do not lay *that* flattering unction to your soul. I will hold you fast. Come, repay me for all you have inflicted—bitterness you are incapable of measuring, profoundest mortification, cruel desertion. Atone as you offered by saying, ‘ Ralph, I promise to be your wife when you claim me.’ ”

“ And you will quite forgive me if I do ? ” cried Marjory, overwhelmed with shame and penitence.

"Yes, quite," with a peculiar smile. In a low and broken voice she repeated the words.

There was a moment's silence. Then Ellis, who had thrown himself into a chair, exclaimed :

"It was a dreadful breach of trust to tell that brother of yours, as you call him, you were going to marry me."

"I could not help it. I wanted his advice. I wanted some one to speak to ; and he is both kind and safe, quite safe."

"I daresay he will hold his tongue for *your* sake," significantly. "What did he say ?"

"Oh, he scolded me and abused you."

"Ah ! very likely. Of course, so admirable a young man would not be guilty of such folly."

"Who ? Dick ? Oh, never."

"Well, perhaps he has not been tempted. He is a mere boy."

"He seems a man in sense and judgment to *me*."

Ellis looked at her with a cynical smile. "I suppose you will complete your confidence by telling him of your solemn promise to me ?"

"Of course I shall." Another pause.

"Let me put this ring on your finger once more," said Ellis rising and coming over to her.

"No, please do not. I could not account for it, and I will not lie if I can help it."

"Keep it then," holding it out to her.

"No, pray keep it for me. I would rather not have it."

"You will write to me, dearest ?" There was something gone from his voice since they had journeyed north together ; she could not define what.

"And how—where can I write to you ?"

"Oh, I do not know. I must think and tell you. You must not write often. I will be guided by you in all small matters, sweetest Marjory. I shall be in London to-morrow. You will write to my club."

"Yes." She said it faintly.

"Then I must leave you, my shy bright-eyed bird. I wish I had the power to carry you with me. Good-bye ; come, give me a kiss. I deserve one, and I *will* have it." He caught her in his arms, to her infinite terror, when the sound of the door handle turning made him release her quickly, before Dick Cranston was fairly in the room.

The two men stood for an instant eyeing each other in no friendly spirit. Marjory sank into Brand's favourite armchair.

"Mr. Ellis," said Dick coldly, "I cannot say I am glad to see you."

"Very likely not," returned Ellis readily ; "yet I should have imagined that a young fellow like yourself would have sympathized with, and even smiled at the imprudence of a senior.

Are you so thoroughly a *brother* in spirit to Miss Acland that you cannot perceive how impossible it was for a man who loved her to resist securing at once his own happiness and her deliverance from a miserable home?"

"If you had really loved her you would not have persuaded her to take such a step," said Dick gravely.

"Counsels of perfection which are beyond me," returned Ellis with an irrepressible sneer. "You cannot deny that she has amply punished me for any indiscretion I have committed. However, *she* has forgiven me and I have forgiven her. I hope hereafter to win her esteem, and do not despair of even yours," and he smiled cynically. "So once more good-bye." He kissed her hand in a courtly, respectful fashion, and with a defiant bow to Dick, he left the room.

Marjory sat down suddenly by the table, on which she rested her elbows, burying her face in her hands.

"What a cool, insolent rascal!" cried Dick, looking angrily after him. "I was afraid he might force himself upon you. Never mind, Marge; he is gone now, and I hope you are clear of him."

Marjory was crying quietly though bitterly as if her heart would break.

"Don't give in now, Marge, after showing such pluck."

"Oh! I can't help it, Dick. I shall *never* be clear of Mr. Ellis. I have—he has made me, promise to marry him by-and-by, when he can marry openly."

"What!" cried Dick in so stern and angry a tone that Marjory ceased crying and lifted her head to look at him; "you have been so miserably weak as to let that sneering devil bamboozle you? I am amazed! I am disappointed. It is unworthy of you." He strode across to the fire-place, and, leaning against the mantelpiece, turned his back upon her.

"If you had heard all he said, Dick, you would understand that I could hardly refuse. You know how I tricked him; and before I promised that if he would not insist on marrying me then, I would wait for him as long as he liked. Now he says the only way to atone for my base treachery is to promise to marry him, and I felt so guilty before him that I would have promised anything."

"I would almost rather follow you to your grave than see you the wife of that man," said Dick with strong emotion. "There was more hatred than love in his eyes as he looked at you. You shall *not* marry him, Marge!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

DIPLOMACY.

MRS. ACLAND was sitting serene in the dining-room beside a bright fire, having interviewed cook, examined the larder and looked keenly at the condition of passages and scullery. She was justly proud of the prudence and success with which she had manœuvred her objectionable stepdaughter out of the house.

"And she shall not come back in a hurry," thought Mrs. Acland; "why should *she* be kept under a glass case, when her superior in looks and ability had to rough it with doubtful characters, and struggle up into respectability, in spite of such obstacles as few women have had to encounter—a commonplace school girl pretending to hold her own with *me*, and trying to rival me with her father." She read over the "Money Market" article, in the morning paper, and finding little else of interest, resumed the current of her thoughts. "I wonder what that man Ellis was plotting? Did Marjory understand him? Those honest-looking girls are very deep sometimes. He is in love with her or I am much mistaken. A man of his stamp would not take the trouble to come all the way here unless for personal gratification. I suppose as he is a sort of relation his intentions are honourable; are any man's intentions honourable towards any woman who is not able to take care of herself? At all events I need know nothing and suspect nothing. If she is entangled with him, why, we shall probably never see her again. I should be quite justified in refusing to receive her into the house with my own daughter should she get into a scrape—which is highly probable; then good-bye to Miss Marjory."

Here her reflections were interrupted by the parlour-maid, who presented a letter.

"The promised letter from Edinburgh," said Mrs. Acland to herself, recognizing the writing and examining the post-mark; "this is quicker than I expected." She opened it and read:

"DEAR MRS. ACLAND,

"I am sorry to tell you that I have been much disappointed in the place and people at Stratheogie. They are quite respectable, but rough and common. I have, therefore, given up the engagement, and have arranged to start for home to-morrow morning, arriving about seven in the evening. You may be quite sure that I shall lose no time in looking out for some other employment.

"I am yours very truly,

"MARJORY ACLAND."

Mrs. Acland's face fell as she threw the letter from her, her fair

brows knit themselves and her handsome mouth grew hard. "Back again so soon! there is some mystery in this. If Ellis knew these people how is it that they are too uncouth for Marjory? Has she quarrelled with him? was the whole affair a plant? I wish I had told Mr. Acland of Ellis calling here and saying he knew these Morrisons, then there might be an opportunity of implicating Marjory; as it is, I had better say nothing. It was stupid of me suppressing that visit. How hard it is to know which is best, speaking out or keeping quiet; who could have dreamed that she would have come back within a week? She has quarrelled with Ellis and got the better of him or she would not be so ready to return. I wonder if he travelled north with her? I wish I had gone to see her off. Had I seen him I could make a row; as it is, I had better keep quiet, and start her off as soon as I can. I believe she will stick to us like a burr." Mrs. Acland thrust the letter impatiently into her pocket and went upstairs to tell nurse and to order the garret to be prepared for the "unwelcome guest."

Mr. Acland was much disturbed by the news of Marjory's most unexpected return.

"Something very unusual must have occurred to induce her to leave at once. I trust there has been no infringement of—a—the proprieties? What do you think, my dear?"

"Oh! as to that I don't think you need distress yourself. I fancy it is only Marjory's whims and conceit that have made her throw up the engagement. Probably with her usual want of self-control she showed airs and temper and these quiet country folk will be glad to get rid of her. Marjory's temper will always destroy her chances of success. However, I am willing to do my best for her."

"You are always kind and considerate. I am sure I wish Marjory would live peaceably at home. I cannot think where she got her temper. Her poor mother was placid to a degree, and I am not at all passionate."

"By no means; your temper though determined is calm."

"Exactly so," returned Mr. Acland much gratified. "No one knows me so well as you do, my love. Well, if Marjory is still determined to leave what might be a happy home we will not stop her."

"Perhaps it would be wiser not," said Mrs. Acland, as if giving up her opinion to his.

As may be imagined, Marjory's reception was of the coldest. Her train was late, and dinner when she arrived was over.

"I must say your journey north has not improved your appearance," was Mrs. Acland's remark after her first icy, "How do you do?" In truth Marjory looked ghastly pale and weary, with dark shadows under her eyes.

"Well, Marjory, you find there are worse places than home,"

said her father. "Why did you leave so suddenly?—was there any serious objection to your employers?"

"Very serious to my mind—they were simply rough farmers. I could not have lived with them; but I am too tired to talk about anything to-night. I will take a cup of tea and go to bed. I am very very sorry to come back to trouble you. However, I hope to find something else soon."

"Had you not better take a glass of wine, Marjory? you seem over-fatigued," asked her father, touched by her aspect.

"Thank you; I will as *you* ask me," she returned with a slight tremble in her voice. She felt sorely in need of something to sustain her; and having swallowed it, bid Mrs. Acland and her father good-night.

What a home-coming! with all that pressed upon her mind and memory. What a contrast to the tender care, the thoughtful consideration lavished upon her by Brand and Dick.

If she could only have stayed with them, to be their housekeeper, to mend their clothes and look after them generally, life would have been too lovely; but delighted as both seemed to have her for a guest, neither seemed to think it possible she could remain. How grieved Brand appeared to part with her, and Dick seemed almost as sorry; though he did not quite forgive her for letting Ellis extract the promise she had given. How earnestly he entreated her to write and tell him everything; his last words were whispered: "Marge, get clear of Ellis—unless you love him, which I trust in God you do not."

"Love him! No!" but she felt remorseful towards him, and a little afraid of him, but for the present she would put him out of her mind. There was enough to worry about just now, and Ellis was fading into a distant danger. He would not trouble her for a long time; and she sank to sleep with the memory of Dick's kind earnest eyes and slightly-knit brow as he huskily bid her farewell, for her last waking thought.

* * * * *

The sudden apparition of Marjory, her strange story, the extraordinary mixture of courage and weakness she had shown; her hard fate in having to return to her father's house, made a deep impression on Dick Cranston. He was imaginative in a strong slow fashion—small matters did not move his creative powers to conjure up mind pictures, but once touched or stirred to indignation the impression took deep hold and haunted him.

Though simple and unpretending in nature, he had a high ideal of life and conduct, none the less stringent because he was quite unconscious of cherishing a loftier standard than the ordinary young man of every-day life. He was in some ways old for his years—steady and earnest, yet full of enthusiasm, of which he spoke little. He was almost startled at the fiery turmoil into which Marjory's tears, her extraordinary escape, and above all, her semi

recapture, had thrown him. He should have enjoyed hurling Ellis downstairs, and reflected with grim satisfaction that he *could* have done so; Ellis was a villain, of that he felt convinced, and he half feared Marjory liked the scoundrel.

The evening after her departure Dick came in late. He had been intensely diligent in his work, and looked tired and out of spirits when he sat down with Brand to their evening meal, of which they partook almost in silence.

When the table was cleared, Brand settled himself in his chair for a quiet smoke, while Dick got pencil and paper and began drawing lines and curves.

"What are you about?" asked Brand, after watching him for a few minutes.

"Trying to put some ideas that came to me to-day into shape."

"You have worked enough. Can't you let your brain rest?"

"Perhaps I had better," said Dick, turning his chair round; "it does not feel too clear."

"I feel in the down-below too," returned Brand. "I tell you what, we both miss that sister of yours. Ah! if I had a daughter like her, I should not be here now. But after all, would *anything* have kept me from making a fool of myself?"

"Poor Marge! I wonder how she is getting on. I wish we could have kept her with us."

"Ay! but we couldn't, you see, neither of us being any relation to her."

"No?" said Dick doubtfully, and there was a pause. "She has had a hard life of it," he resumed presently. "She was dead against me at first, and my mother too; I can't describe her scorn."

"Ha! I suppose she is not first favourite with Mrs. Acland?"

"My mother was positively cruel to her. Well, Marjory, who always gave herself airs of superiority over George and me, was worse when she came from school. She was furious because I was in her father's office and her brother sent apprentice to sea; and I do not wonder at it. How she used to flare up!" He laughed softly. "She seemed just transparent with her big eyes and speaking face, as if one could see the dancing flames in her heart. One day I broke out and told her how she hurt me. She seemed struck, as if a new light had come to her, and she softened; she begged my pardon, so sweetly, so frankly! and from that time we were friends, such friends when George went away, and we had the schoolroom to ourselves. *That* was the happiest time I ever had. How we used to talk, and how she used to mend my things and scold me! It all came to a sudden end though. If you care to hear, I will tell you all about it; it is a great secret," and he gave Brand for the first time the history of the theft from Mr. Acland's safe, of the way in which his mother threw suspicion upon him, by her entreaties that he would confess. Brand was

so deeply interested that he let his pipe go out and forgot to re-light it.

"But she did not really believe you guilty?"

"I do not think she could. I am sure Mr. Acland did not, nor did Mr. Cross, his partner, to whom I went and told the whole story. I don't think any one else ever heard of the affair, as it was Mr. Acland's money that was taken. I resolved to go away and work independently for my own living, however humbly. Then it was that Marjory stood to me like a trump. She had a little money her brother had sent her, and she insisted on giving nearly all of it to me. How she cried when we parted; her grief cut into my soul. Then came the great surprise of our meeting at Beaulieu. She was delighted to see me just as I stood—a workman in working clothes, though she was with a couple of swells; but she was always a trump. Then you know the rest."

"I suspect the governess engagement was a bad business; she is well out of it."

"A very bad business," said Dick with a sigh. "I wish I could tell you all about it, but I am bound by my promise."

"Of course, of course."

They were silent for a few minutes. Then Brand suddenly asked:

"When did this *fracas* about the money take place?"

"More than a year and a half ago, shortly after you called at Falkland Terrace, and my mother was so cut up at seeing you."

"Ay, and shortly after that infernal scoundrel Blake, the stock-broker, levanted; that was queer. Mr. Acland had dealings with him?"

"Not for some time. I think my mother distrusted him, and she rules Mr. Acland in everything."

"Well she might distrust him," said Brand sternly, with a quick, angry flash from his usually smiling eyes. "He was, and no doubt is, an unmitigated rascal."

"Then you knew him?"

"Yes, few knew him so well. He was the worst enemy your father ever had; ay, or your mother either."

"Is that possible? Why, he used to dine at Falkland Terrace. He dined there a couple of weeks before he disappeared."

"You surprise me. Yet why should anything surprise me? Do not let us speak of the villain any more; he has gone under. I suppose, and I hope he will never turn up again, unless to be hung."

Brand rose and relieved his wrath by a few turns to and fro. Dick looked at him in some surprise. He was usually so lazily quiet, so rarely moved in any way that the present burst was unprecedented. But it did not last. Returning to his seat, Brand relit his pipe and muttered, more to himself than his companion, "There is no use in looking back, and hopeless to try

and repair mistakes. Keep steady, my boy. Put your heart in your work, and be deaf and blind to whatever would lead you from it."

"I think I am tolerably fond of it, and have found as yet little to distract me."

"Yes, you are steady enough. If I had stuck to my art as you stick to yours I should have been— Bah! There is no use in talking."

"You are twice as clever as I am, and you work hard enough now."

"Yes, when it is too late. There, let us say no more."

"You are very good to listen to my bit of a story with so much interest."

"Interest!" repeated Brand, stretching out his hand impulsively and grasping Dick's hand, "I tell you I look on you as a son, though I fear I am not exactly the sort of father men wish to adopt."

"I will be very thankful if you choose to adopt *me*," returned Dick, with the soft smile that sometimes gave beauty to his grave face.

"Then I do take you for my son from this hour," said Brand with a certain solemnity, and shaded his eyes with his hand for a few moments. "I have had a letter from Lord Beaulieu," were his next words, in a different tone; "he is getting impatient that we should get away to Fleury. How soon do you think we can finish our present piece of work?"

"In three or four weeks."

"Scarcely. Say five, that will take us into December. But we will push on as fast as we can. I long to be off. Fleury is a nice place, a splendid climate, and it will take six or seven months' work to carry out all Lord Beaulieu's plans. Living is cheap and the pay good. Let us save up and take a run over to Florence when we are free. I gather strength under the skies of the sunny south; bring over that portfolio, I have some sketches and plans; I will give you an idea of what we—Lord Beaulieu and myself—thought of doing," and the pair of friends plunged into a professional discussion.

Mrs. Acland had only reserved her cross-examining powers until she had Marjory to herself, as her curiosity was excited to an irritating degree. Yet she did not like to put the leading questions her conjecture suggested before her husband, who though not too observant, might possibly suspect their drift.

Now the morning after Marjory's arrival, Mr. Acland had appointed to meet his wife in town on some domestic business, and Marjory had escaped for a long walk with the children. Mrs. Acland was therefore obliged to defer putting her stepdaughter on the rack till next day. She invited Marjory in a friendly manner to come and help her with some needlework for the children, add-

ing, "I know you did all your own before you started on that unfortunate expedition of yours."

"Very well," returned Marjory, who was too humble in her own estimation to resist anything just now.

Mrs. Acland commenced operations by detailing some domestic grievances, in order to get up a confidential tone; Sarah, the parlour-maid was beginning to give herself airs, she had made quite a fuss because her mistress had insisted on having the drawing-room cleaned that morning instead of on Friday, which was the usual day; if this sort of nonsense was repeated Sarah's doom was fixed. Marjory listened with a careless degree of surprise, as Mrs. Acland had never hitherto had, or confessed to having, household difficulties. She replied that it was stupid of Sarah, who seemed a sensible, clever servant.

Mrs. Acland had just uttered the words, "There is no accounting for——" when the delinquent in question flung open the door, announcing in a vicious tone, "Mr. Ellis," and ushered the refined diplomat into the little study, where the table was strewn with small garments under repair, with "torn off" pieces, with paper patterns, and crowned by the big grubby nursery work-basket.

Mrs. Acland grew white with anger as—to speak dramatically—she felt the sting of Sarah's revenge. As to Marjory she shivered as the awful thought suggested itself, "Has he come to declare himself, and marry me openly?" She could not command her voice as she stood up, put her hand into his and received his greeting in silence. "This is an unexpected pleasure," said Mrs. Acland, recovering herself gallantly and offering him a chair. "I thought you were in Paris by this time," while she looked keenly at Marjory.

Ellis was cool and imperturbable as ever; he did not attempt to exchange a glance with his trembling *fiancée*, but drawing the seat offered him beside her, said: "I was detained by family business, and got a few days' additional leave. I must apologize for intruding at so early an hour, but I heard last night of Miss Acland's return, and have come to ask particulars. I am awfully distressed that things did not turn out satisfactorily. Pray tell me your objections. If you have any serious complaints I must see that apologies and reparation are made."

His tone was so easy and natural that Mrs. Acland was profoundly puzzled, while Marjory was amazed at his audacity.

"Perhaps I had not much to complain of," she said, gathering her forces. "Perhaps I expected too much; but the family seemed so rough and—and untrained. I did not like the idea of going abroad with them. I—in short, I felt I must come away home."

"In short, you found haggis and porridge, material and social, with nothing more digestible. Well, I warned you they were not gentry—the Morrisons I mean—but they are honest respectable

people. I ought to have remembered that a young lady requires more niceties than sportsmen accustomed to rough it."

"The fact is," put in Mrs. Acland, "Marjory was in too great a hurry to run away from a comfortable home to try her luck among strangers. I hope you have learnt a lesson, my dear."

"I have indeed."

"I cannot say how deeply I regret having been instrumental in sending Miss Acland on so fruitless an errand. I beg you and Mr. Acland will forgive me. I dare not hope to make my peace with your daughter?"

"It was my own fault for being so precipitate," murmured Marjory.

"Can I in any way atone?" said Ellis earnestly, turning to her. Mrs. Acland took the opportunity of his eyes being fixed on Marjory to sweep away some of the pile which encumbered the table, and Ellis took advantage of her action to slip a small thick note he had held in his left hand into Marjory's while he continued speaking, "for although I must travel to Paris to-night, I can write to Mrs. Morrison. I am sure some compensation——"

"I could not possibly claim any," said Marjory quickly; "I broke the engagement I undertook; I put every one to inconvenience, and I cannot complain." She had hastily concealed the note in her pocket before Mrs. Acland had resumed her seat.

"I assure you I do not know when I was so profoundly mortified," resumed Ellis in a tone expressive of just the right degree of concern. "I wish I could do the state, that is, Miss Acland, some service which would obliterate my *maladresse*. If you think of leaving home," turning to her again, "why do you not join the Carterets? I am sure you were of infinite use to them."

"But Uncle Carteret would not have me," cried Marjory; a faint irrepressible smile at Ellis's audacity parting her lips.

"Well, I shall see my worthy kinsmen in Paris (they do not move on to Rome till the second week in November). Have you any objection to my negotiating your residence with them for a year or two?"—he looked earnestly, tenderly into her eyes—"You know old Carteret is inclined to hear words of wisdom from my lips."

"No, no," said Marjory, "I would rather not be forced upon him."

"I have already outstaid my time," said Ellis rising, "and I have a great deal to accomplish before I start. Will you," addressing Mrs. Acland, "will you allow me to leave my address in Paris with you? and if, under your good counsel, Miss Acland changes her mind, perhaps you will let me know; but pray let it be soon, for I do not hope to do much with Mr. Carteret, except by word of mouth." He bowed over Mrs. Acland's outstretched hand, and contrived to hold Marjory's a moment, while he sent a

look of entreaty into her eyes, his back carefully turned to the lady of the house—and was gone.

A short silence ensued. Marjory, feeling that Mrs. Acland's keen glance was upon her, forced herself to resume her needle-work calmly; she could not attempt to leave the room in order to read her letter lest she might arouse suspicion.

"Mr. Ellis seems to take a great interest in you," said Mrs. Acland at last. She did not venture to push her queries very far—conscience made a coward of her. She knew that she had tacitly handed her young stepdaughter over to this man, and it would not do to show how much she surmised. Moreover, she was really puzzled; she began to doubt that he had accompanied Marjory to Scotland; if he had, she would not have left him, and if they had quarrelled he would not have called and asked for particulars respecting her return in that easy natural way. She would certainly write to that Mrs. Morrison; she thought she could remember the address.

These ideas flashed through her brain while Marjory was saying:

"Yes, he is very good."

"I suppose you were great friends at that place in the country, the Priory."

"Not particularly; he was a help certainly when Mr. Carteret was particularly fidgety, and so far useful."

"Oh! I daresay he amused himself with you in that stupid hole."

"Perhaps so," said Marjory indifferently, anxious to end the conversation anyhow; probably it was the most baffling answer she could have given her stepmother, who calculated on her showing pique or embarrassment or emotion of some kind.

"Mr. Ellis does not give one the idea of a philanthropist."

"No, certainly not; yet some people seemed to like him. Lord Beaulieu was always asking him to the Castle, and coming over to the Priory."

"Who?" asked Mrs. Acland, caught by the sounding title.

"Lord Beaulieu," repeated Marjory, noticing the effect of her words. "He was one of our neighbours; he was making great improvements and restorations at the Castle. It was there I saw Dick at work, dressed just like a workman," she added, gathering up spirit to carry the war into the enemy's country, and enjoying the raid.

"If he was, it is his own fault," said Mrs. Acland surprised and angered; "he had every chance of doing well here."

"He could hardly stay when he was accused of being a thief, could he?" said Marjory in a quiet confidential tone.

"No one accused him," cried Mrs. Acland, gazing at the speaker.

Here a summons to inspect the putting up of fresh muslin curtains obliged Mrs. Acland to quit the field.

Marjory breathed freer when she was alone, but she made no attempt to look at her letter till she was finally released from her stepmother's presence at dinner time, when she was at her own request excused appearing.

It was not without emotion that she glanced first hastily and then more deliberately through the closely-written pages; they were pervaded by a tone of subdued warmth, and spoke of the tie which existed between them. He implored her for frequent tidings of herself, and begged her to take counsel with him how she could best escape the gloom and discomfort of her home.

Marjory read it twice with care, then tore it in small pieces, and striking a match consumed the fragments.

"Why do I distrust him so much?" mused Marjory. "It would be a solution of many difficulties if I could love him and believe in him. But he is too clever, too like an irresistible fate; only, I will resist as long as I can,"—even while she resolved so bravely, she smiled with a certain sense of enjoyment as she thought of Mrs. Acland's mystification. Ellis was more than a match for her astute stepmother.

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

WITH the first month of winter upon us, we are all settling down as comfortably as may be, after the glorious jubilee summer we have enjoyed, to the pleasures and occupations of the short days and long evenings that lie before us. Winter is full of delights to those who know how to enjoy this much maligned season. The wisest people and the truest philosophers are those who extract the greatest sweetness from the hours as they pass; the blossoms that old time sheds around us. Some of us say that we love summer too well to be able to face the prospect of the long winter with any pleasure. Others delight in winter, and are relieved when summer is over. These are not philosophers. True wisdom sees pleasant hours in every season. Summer is more festive in its character, but there is always the restless, haunting feeling about a lovely summer day, that we are not making as much of it or getting as much good out of it as we might. It is like poor Elia's holidays, which, he declared, were spoiled by this very feeling. But in winter we are not sorry to see the day close in since it brings the pleasant hour when outer cold is shut away from sight and additional warmth and comfort surround us. When the lovely summer day dies, however, we feel a keen sense of actual loss. There will never, we know well, be another day quite like it. The beauty of it will never be exactly repeated for us. The exquisite sunset clouds will never again be seen in those very forms that have enchanted our eyes and appealed so irresistibly to our fancy. But in winter time one fire is as good as another; to-morrow, we think, will be very like to-day, with, perhaps, less fog and a better book to read. To reverse the poet's thought, it is in summer that we wrestle with our burden of discontent. In winter it slips from us to return with the first breath of spring in the air, the first daffodil we see, the first note of the lark's song that we hear. The contented little warble of the robin just suits the dark days when it sings, and agrees with our frame of mind. But in the spring days and in the glow and brightness of summer, the lark's "wild, careless rapture" expresses for the voiceless among humans the divine discontent and longing that the sunny days bring with them for us.

So, welcome winter! Fogs are disagreeable, certainly, especially

the "London particular," which is so successfully brewed by our chimneys and so impartially distributed among the evil and the good, choking both varieties indiscriminately and bringing tears to unaccustomed as well as to accustomed eyes. A fog is an evil thing, but then what a pleasure there is in waking up of a morning and seeing no fog! We could not enjoy our gentle negations were there no evil things to negative. Think how Lucy Smith, in Mr. George Moore's remarkable story, enjoyed the nights she had no dreams, poor girl. And when no fogs are here, how we shall enjoy our winter days. There are pictures to be seen all over London. The delightful "London Society" sketches of Mr. Du Maurier are still visible at the Fine Art Society's Galleries in Bond Street. The Art Union prizes are on view at the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-colours, in Piccadilly. Some exquisite pictures are among these prizes. The Photographic Society of Great Britain keeps open its exhibition in Pall Mall till the middle of November. There are the marvellous pictures of M. Vassili Verestchagin at the Grosvenor Gallery, a collection which, for versatility of conception and style, have never been surpassed. And other exhibitions will be opened as the days grow shorter.

Nor is there lack of new plays. M. Mayer's programme for the season at the Royalty is a delightful one. Coquelin is here, and will appear in some of his best parts. In "Un Parisien" he will allow us to study the veritable type of cultivated Frenchmen, who looks on existence as he might regard a dinner, examining it from every point of view in order to be able to extract as much enjoyment from it, and as little of the other thing, as may be possible. We are promised "Francillon," too, with charming Madame Jane May in the title rôle. She is to play in "Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie" as well, and mothers may safely take their young daughters to hear M. Pailleron's comedy. Nor need they fear to let them hear "Mademoiselle de la Seiglière," one of the prettiest plays in the French language. M. Mayer promises us Madame Chaumont, and later in the season the three opera bouffes, "La Périchole," "La Grande Duchesse," and "La Mascotte." This is the nineteenth season of French plays under M. Mayer's auspices. Intellectual London ought to feel itself under a debt of gratitude to him.

The revival of Cellier's "Sultan of Mocha," at the Strand Theatre, has pleased the lovers of pretty music. The piece has been mounted in a charming manner; a very effective set being the view of Greenwich Hospital a century ago. Miss Violet Cameron looks to advantage in the graceful dresses of her part. One of her dainty little caps, will, I fancy, become the fashion very speedily. There could hardly be a better entertainment of its kind than "Miss Esmeralda" at the Gaiety. It is humorously called a "melodramatic burlesque," and is, of course, a parody on

Victor Hugo's "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." Miss Marion Hood, as Esmeralda, looks a very charming gipsy, in a most picturesque costume of olive green and pink madder, red scarf, and blue cap. M. Meyer Lütz's music is abundantly tuneful and remains singing itself in the memory long after one has heard it. The piece is produced in a manner approaching absolute perfection as regards scenery, dresses, and arrangements. Mr. Lonnen's song "Killaloo" is the sensation of the evening for those who enjoy a hearty laugh. Then again, the revival of "Sophia," at the Vaudeville, is among the very good things of the season dramatic. One doubts if Fielding himself ever pictured his heroine as half so charming as Miss Kate Rorke.

We are all looking forward to passing many a pleasant evening in Terry's Theatre, the first completely fireproof building of its kind. It holds eight hundred people, and is provided with exits sufficient for about three thousand. This is full measure, heaped up and running over, which one would be glad to see copied everywhere. All the woodwork is painted with fireproof paints, and the stage is cut off from the auditorium by a fireproof curtain. The colour of the hangings is an exquisite harmony of apple-green silk and brown-pink plush. Under the electric light, with which the theatre is to be illuminated, these tints will look lovely indeed, and will set forth to enormous advantage pretty faces and careful toilets.

Mr. Corney Grain's new entertainment is to the full as amusing as his previous ones have been. It is to be wished that every drawing-room singer could hear his caricature of the ballad of the day and realize that hard breathing is not singing.

Among the pleasures of the season, I must not forget to include that of the winter outfit. Spending money is a delightful occupation, and when it is combined with the adornment of our person, it takes an added hue of joy. There are persons of puritan proclivities who actually think that it is wrong of women to care how they look. There are others who hold wider views, and recognize the fact that nature herself made women ornamental (generalization must here be understood) and expects them to carry out her views. The best and nicest women like to look their best. They know that to present an attractive appearance is to wield an influence which they ought to make as strong as it possibly can be made—by means legitimate. And do English-women ever look more charming than when their fair faces are set off by the rich textures and deep warm tones of winter clothing? A dainty picture is a lovely English girl in the felt hat or close cloth bonnet, the warm furs and neat dark costume, in which she takes her wintry walks abroad.

LONDON SOCIETY.

DECEMBER, 1887.

A CRACK COUNTY.

By Mrs. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT,"
"A REAL GOOD THING," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGER IN THE LAND.

ROBERT JARRETT'S mother and the late Captain Straightem had been only brother and sister.

As children, the boy and girl were devoted to each other, but when they grew up, fate, that capricious goddess, cast their lots in very different places.

The young man went into the Guards, looked brave and handsome in his uniform, spent a considerable amount of money, idled away his days, denied himself no luxury, and, as times go, was a credit to his doting father.

As for Fanny, well, poor Fanny made what was considered a most terrible "*mésalliance*." She was destined to marry into the aristocracy, and she married an agriculturist.

When this unfortunate event took place she was very young; only a month over seventeen, and had but just returned from a fashionable boarding-school in Brighton, where she had been finishing her education, previous to making her entry in society.

But, alas! like a silly, romantic child, she fell desperately in love with a young man, aged twenty-one, who had been sent down to Stiffshire to learn farming; presumably because he had not brains enough to learn anything else, or to pass the necessary examinations for the army. At any rate, he took to turnips and oil-cake.

He was a gentleman by birth, and that was about all that could be said for him—at least, so Squire Straightem declared when his daughter came with tears in her pretty, blue eyes, and begged him to give his consent to her engagement with Mr. Charles Jarrett.

The squire turned purple in the face, almost had a fit of apoplexy, and refused flatly. The idea! Why, the girl must be mad.

But Fanny was too much smitten by her lover's pleasant manners, and professions of affection, to listen to reason. She even thought there was something fine in making a sacrifice for the sake of him she loved. Anyhow, she was young, ignorant and headstrong.

Her grandmother had left her five thousand pounds. Over this sum she possessed absolute control. Master Charles' income consisted of two hundred a year. He was an orphan, and had neither expectations nor interest; but, to do him justice, he was genuinely attached to Fanny. To make a long story short, one fine day the imprudent and impatient young couple got married secretly, trusting that when they were actually man and wife the squire would relent and be induced to make them some further provision than that derived from their own very limited means.

But, like many others, they reckoned without their host.

Old Squire Straightem flew into a towering passion when he found that little, innocent, blue-eyed Fanny had defied him by taking the law into her own hands. Refusing to listen to her prayers for forgiveness, he swore a mighty oath that she should never set foot inside his house again. And he was as good as his word.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jarrett were therefore obliged to fall back upon their own resources. These, as we know, were not large. Fanny was inexperienced; she had been extravagantly brought up, and had no notion of housekeeping.

For six months they tried living in England; but they found that, do what they would, they were running into debt. No one could have had better intentions than the poor little bride, but she had everything to learn in her new life, and also a good deal to unlearn. It came hardly to her at first, and nobody need blame her if she made a few blunders. Most of us similarly situated would have done the same.

But they were a brave young couple, and when things seemed likely to go from bad to worse, they made up their minds to shake themselves free of the old shackles and start afresh in Australia. This they did; and with Fanny's five thousand pounds Charles Jarret bought a sheep farm and stocked it with sheep.

Sometimes they had good years, sometimes they had bad; but they managed to keep their heads above water, and on the whole prospered fairly well. At all events, Fanny never regretted the step she had taken, even although it had completely estranged her from her father and brother.

Charles Jarret was far too easy-going and indolent a man to grow rich. A large family—of whom Robert was the eldest—and as the years went by, very indifferent health, effectually prevented him from making a fortune.

Thus, when he died at the comparatively early age of forty-eight, he was unable to do more than leave his wife and children above want.

But Robert, or Bob as he was familiarly called, had already shown himself to be a far more active, energetic and stirring individual than his father. He had not inherited Charles Jarrett's constitutional laziness of disposition, which had effectually prevented him from getting on in the world.

The farm was left to Robert. The young man soon discovered that to a great extent it had been grievously mismanaged, and that its powers of production had never really been tested. His first care was to put everything in thorough order.

Next he tried hard to improve the breed of sheep and introduced several new strains of blood. But he was not satisfied with those that were available; and after a couple of years scraped enough money together to provide for the family in his absence, and to take him to England. Naturally, he was eager to visit the country where his mother had been born and bred. He was aware that, as matters stood at present, Captain Straightem's property would revert to him. But he never counted on this contingency.

It seemed altogether too remote, for Captain Straightem was by no means an old man, and might at any time take it into his head to get married.

Bob, in his own mind, was so convinced that sooner or later his uncle would espouse a better-half, that it very rarely occurred to him to think of himself as only one step removed from a magnificent estate and close upon fifteen thousand a year.

No such thought actuated him when he set foot upon English ground and deemed it his duty to write and inform Captain Straightem of his arrival, in case that gentleman might express a wish to make his (Bob's) acquaintance.

To this letter he had received no reply; in lieu thereof came a lawyer's communication, formally worded, acquainting him of the fact, that owing to his uncle's sudden decease in the hunting field, he was now the possessor of Straightem Court, with all its adjoining lands. Bob's amazement may be more easily conceived than described.

In fact his astonishment was too great to allow him to derive any immediate satisfaction from the extraordinary alteration that had taken place in his prospects.

It did just flash through his mind that henceforth, if he chose, he might apply his energies to improving the breed of English rather than of Australian sheep, but that was all.

It never even struck him that his presence might be necessary at Straightem Court, until he received a second letter from the family solicitor, requesting his immediate attendance. Then by slow degrees he began to realize that he, who was accustomed to rise with the sun, to saddle and dress his own horse, to be

content with coarse fare and to put his hand to every job that came in the way, was now transformed into a fine gentleman, who had nothing to do but take his pleasure and amuse himself from morning till night. This dawned upon Bob as such a stupendous idea that it almost took away his breath. It is not an easy thing when all your thoughts have been attuned to a particular groove, suddenly to divert them into another and totally unfamiliar one. It takes a little time before the adaptation becomes complete.

Bob was a young man who possessed an immense amount of vitality and of that nervous force which delights in work and in conquering it. He liked the active, even if somewhat rough, life which he had hitherto led.

He enjoyed the responsibility of being the head of the family and of feeling that his brothers and sisters were dependent on him. It sent a thrill of pleasurable pride through his frame to see their bright and happy faces as they came clustering round him after a hard day's work. Somehow or other the simple homely way in which they lived seemed to bind every member of the family, from the eldest to the youngest, in ties of close affection.

True they were not rich, each one had to take his or her share in the daily toil, but for all that they had been very, very happy.

Would they be as happy if they lived in a grand house, had any amount of money to spend and lots of servants to wait upon them, instead of waiting upon themselves as they had hitherto been accustomed to do?

Bob hoped so; but he was not quite sure.

This sudden change in their lives seemed to him a bit of an experiment; it might or it might not turn out well.

He was Australian born and bred, and loved the sunny land of his birth; he possessed a sturdy independence and manly bluntness, which did very well for the colonies, but he was sensitive enough to feel that, in his new position, his manners would probably require a considerable amount of toning down. In Australia people did not wrap their speech up in silver paper, they said what they meant and did not sneer at conversation which owed its birth to home interests, and often to home interests alone.

But Bob had not been four and twenty hours in the old country before he realized that a subtle difference existed between it and the new; the former was more polished if not so fresh; more fastidious and critical, though infinitely less light-hearted.

Even as regarded his dress, he soon came to have considerable misgivings.

His brown velveteen suit, red tie, and checked trousers, no longer afforded him *quite* the same satisfaction as on board ship.

Somehow they seemed out of place in the London streets, where he noticed people all dressed quietly and mostly in black or dark

colours. Once or twice his appearance evidently excited surprise, and he felt extremely uncomfortable, not knowing exactly what there was about it that was wrong.

In fact, if General Prosieboy had but known with how much inward trepidation "The Duffer, The Brute, The Creature" was about to enter into his kingdom, even he might have felt mollified and not been quite so hostilely inclined towards Captain Straightem's unknown nephew and successor.

But the die was cast; the fiat had gone forth.

Robert P. Jarrett was doomed beforehand.

The Mutual Adorationites had decided that he should neither be known nor yet visited.

Other people might take up with him if they chose; but *they* would not demean themselves by having anything whatever to do with an individual who wore the wrong kind of clothes, and had no pretensions of "the right sort."

Mr. Jarrett should be made to feel in every possible way that his presence in the county was undesired and superfluous; that he was unpardonably occupying a house which, but for him, might have been inhabited by a good fellow; and that under no circumstances could he ever be accepted as fit company for the Mutual Adorationites. If he insisted on coming out hunting, of course they could not actually prevent him. He had a right to gallop over the fields and tear after the hounds if he chose.

But nobody need speak to him, except to swear roundly at him if he got in the way, or committed the smallest error of inexperience.

They could all stare at him blankly, and refuse to recognize his presence as a fellow-creature. They could feign deafness if he hazarded a remark; blindness if he came across their path.

They could show him the cold shoulder to his face, and abuse him to their heart's content behind his back.

And this the Mutual Adorationites, according to their usual manners and customs, were determined to do.

He should be snubbed, and snubbed effectively.

For had not General Prosieboy given out that their poor old friend Straightem's successor was a "duffer" and an "outsider," with whom they ought not to associate? And would it not be showing disrespect to the dead man's memory, if they received with open arms a nephew of whom, in his lifetime, he was evidently ashamed?

Yes. There was such a thing as *esprit de corps*. If the Mutual Adorationites did not wish to be swamped altogether by the odious radical wave of the century, they were bound to uphold their ancient habits and customs.

Moreover, *they* were perfectly satisfied with themselves as they were, and wanted no innovations introduced amongst their ranks.

CHAPTER VI.

OPPRESSED BY SO MUCH GRANDEUR.

ALTHOUGH our friend Bob had heard and read a good deal of the luxurious and, to a great extent, indolent way in which English gentlemen live when at all well off, he had no really definite notions on the subject until he arrived at Straightem Court. His mother had often talked to her children of the magnitude of her old home; but then seeing a thing with one's own eyes is very different from having an impression made upon your mind through the medium of somebody else's optics.

The number and size of the rooms at Straightem Court fairly amazed Bob.

"What are they all for? What are they all for?" he kept on asking of the family solicitor who showed him over the premises, and had promised to remain for a day or two.

"For use, I suppose," replied that worthy, with a strong accent of reproof.

"For use! Do you mean to tell me that one parlour is not enough for anybody? Why, on my farm in Australia, we never dreamt of wanting a dining, drawing, breakfast, billiard and reading room, as you seem to have here. And what's more, it ain't comfort—leastways, to my mind," concluded Bob, decidedly.

His companion looked at him with a smile half supercilious, half contemptuous.

"You'll soon get to alter some of your opinions, Mr. Jarrett. It is quite evident that you have lived very much out of the world."

"Damn his impudence," muttered Bob, *sotto voce*. "He talks as if there were no other country but his own particular, little sea-girt island. It's wonderful how ignorant and how cheeky these Englishmen are. There's no getting them to see themselves in their true light."

But he kept his reflections to himself, and turning sharply to his uncle's solicitor, said:

"And pray, what about the servants? Am I supposed to keep all this troop of idle people, eating me out of house and home? Because it strikes me that would come uncommon rough on a fellow, especially when, like myself, he is a stranger at the game."

"You will be able to arrange all these matters to your own satisfaction when once you have regularly entered into possession," said the other stiffly, beginning to think what a terrible, sharp, fresh, outspoken aborigine this was.

"Come! that's a mercy at any rate," said Bob, with a sigh of

relief; for the mere contemplation of maintaining so large a staff of domestics was oppressive, and filled him with dismay. Yet, distrustful of his own opinions on subjects of which hitherto he had had no experience, he added seriously: "Listen, Tomlinson. You are a sensible man, and can give me a straightforward answer to a straightforward question. I only want to get at the *reason* of things, and no doubt you can tell me what is the use of all these idle folks? It seems to me there are too many of them by half, and they only make work for one another."

Mr. Tomlinson scratched his head, and looked somewhat perplexed. The question put thus, was not altogether easy to answer.

"It is customary, Mr. Jarrett, in all large houses, to keep up a good establishment—that is to say, where there are sufficient means."

Bob's face assumed a thoughtful expression.

"I don't see," he said, "how one person, living quite alone like my late uncle, could possibly need so many people to minister to his wants. It seems an anomaly for a single man to employ such a number of folks just to attend to his mere personal requirements. Now, if I were an English gentleman, I should hate to feel myself dependent upon my cook, butler, or footman, as the case might be. It's turning a fellow into a regular slave, and a slave of a very poor, contemptible order."

"I suppose you learnt those ideas out in Australia," said Mr. Tomlinson rather uncomfortably, and on that account trying to infuse an extra amount of satire into his voice.

"Perhaps I did, and perhaps I didn't," answered Bob, a bit nettled by the solicitor's overbearing manner. "Anyhow, whether I learnt them in Australia or elsewhere, they are ideas of which I do not feel at all ashamed, and on the contrary should despise myself if I did not entertain. There is a padded person in this house, with sham white hair, and sham round calves, who comes to open the door. Can you tell me what that cumbrous mass of human flesh, with its painful deficiency of human brains, is good for?—since I am convinced he has never done a stroke of real, honest work in his life. I ask this because the individual in question has aroused my curiosity."

"I presume you mean Charles, the footman. A very fine, well-made man, over six feet in height, and an ornament to any gentleman's establishment," returned Mr. Tomlinson.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Bob. "Just as a fatted ox is an ornament to the gentleman's farm. I begin to see matters in a clearer light. Show evidently comes before use over here."

"Charles answers the bells, waits at table, and, as far as I know, has always proved himself to be an honest and respectable servant," said Tomlinson, testily.

"My dear sir, honesty and respectability are very excellent things in their way. Nobody has a greater respect for them than

myself. But when you find these admirable qualities united to intense slowness of perception and pomposity of movement, to crass stupidity and the sloth of an overfed pig, then you can't help thinking that they are not all-sufficient. Now, last night I wanted a glass of whisky and water. At home I would have gone to the cupboard, fetched the whisky bottle, boiled myself a drop of water in the kettle, and got what I wished for without further trouble and little or no delay. Here, there are a butler and a footman, therefore I rang the bell. They either *did* not, or *would* not hear it. In about five minutes' time, after pulling frantically at the bell-rope till at last it gave way, my friend Charles appears. I explain my requirements. He disappears. I wait another ten minutes. Presumably the water is being boiled. Unluckily there is no longer any bell to pull. I wait impatiently, and try to smother the oaths that insist on rising to my lips. Presently I hear a leviathan tread—the tread of an elephant—sounding down the passage. With the deliberation with which all his movements are attended, Charles brings into the room a hot water jug. There is neither glass, whisky, nor sugar. I ask him where they are. He answers that he has forgotten, but will bring them in a minute. A minute, indeed! Exactly a quarter of an hour has elapsed since I first made known my modest demand. By this time, all my desire for a glass of comforting liquor has vanished. I resolve to do without it. No doubt I am all the better for my abstention, but it's no use telling me that this sort of thing is real comfort. It's downright bondage and nothing more, and comes from your old habits, your old institutions and your old country."

Mr. Tomlinson drew himself up to his full height, mentally classifying Bob as an unbearable Yahoo.

"I am sorry our manners and customs should appear so inferior to your Australian ones," he said, with an ill-disguised sneer.

"It's not that," Bob explained eagerly. "Only you don't seem to value Time in the way we do. Now, to waste a quarter of an hour over a drop of whisky would appear to us almost a sin; and not only a sin, but downright ridiculous into the bargain. But then, we are used to waiting upon ourselves, which no doubt makes all the difference."

"We English are a conservative race, I'll admit," returned Mr. Tomlinson, in a more conciliatory tone; "but it is rather hard to find one's own children turn round and abuse one."

"My dear sir," exclaimed Bob, "pray don't imagine for a single moment that I have not the greatest respect and admiration for your race. Why! what have I come over here for, except to pick up a few wrinkles, and profit by some of your insular notions. But you must forgive me if, in my blundering way, I try to distinguish where you are ahead of us, and where we are ahead of you. We look up to Old England with intense veneration, but

then, even the best of mothers gets ancient, and leaves her offspring with an advantage of youth on their side. There are too many of you over here. Your population increases, and you are bound in by the sea. Soon the question will be: 'What shall we eat? How shall we exist?' In Australia and America we have still plenty of room, thank God! but on the other hand our manners are not polished, and we want a great deal of the refinement for which you are conspicuous."

"I am pleased to hear you make the admission, Mr. Jarrett."

"I feel disposed to make any number of admissions, Mr. Tomlinson, only I must not take up your time by inflicting too many of my crude, colonial opinions upon you. And now, what do you say to accompanying me to the stables? A real English hunter is what I have longed all my life to behold."

The solicitor assented to this proposition, whereupon Bob and his mentor gave up arguing and proceeded direct to the stables.

CHAPTER VII.

"NOT HALF A BAD SORT OF GENT."

As is generally the case in most good hunting counties, great care and attention had been bestowed upon the equine department. The stables at Straightem Court were approached by a massive stone archway, rendered picturesque by the luxuriant ivy which clung to its walls.

This archway led into a square, neatly tiled court-yard, round three sides of which ran the hunters' loose boxes, the remaining one being devoted to wash-houses, harness rooms, &c. The late Captain Straightem had prided himself on the number and the superior quality of his horses. No man in the whole county owned better animals or ones of a higher class.

Out of sixteen, nearly all were thoroughbred, or next-door to it.

This fact, perhaps, was not remarkable in itself, but it was rendered so by every single quadruped being up to fourteen stone. And those who know anything of horseflesh will at once recognize how much time, trouble and money must have been expended by the deceased gentleman to achieve such a result.

It is far from being easily obtained.

As a rule, the class of thoroughbreds seen in the hunting field is represented by weedy screws, long and narrow, possessing handy heels and suspicious-looking fore-legs. Nine times out of ten they are worthless cast-offs from the turf, who have been condemned at the very first trial, and never been allowed the chance of disgracing themselves in public.

When our friend Bob walked into the Straightem Court stables, and glanced down the long line of roomy, loose boxes, with their

small-headed, satin-coated inmates, for the first time since his arrival in England he expressed himself in terms of unqualified admiration.

"Yes," he said, turning vivaciously to his companion, "you beat us here, I'll admit. Our horses are all very good in their way, but they are not a patch on these. They are a rough, ragged, common-looking lot in comparison. Not but what they can go—aye, and jump also. I'll back some of our kangaroos at home to get to the bottom of the best horse ever foaled. It's wonderful how the beggars slip over the ground. Occasionally, too, we come across timber that is real awkward. But for all this, I know quite well how very superior your English hunting is."

"I'm delighted you should think *anything* superior over here, Mr. Jarrett," said Tomlinson, still maintaining a tone of asperity. "You've been very hard to satisfy so far."

"Well, anyway, I'm satisfied now; I don't mind confessing how impatient I am to try my hand at some *bona-fide* fox-hunting, such as Australia cannot furnish."

"You have a stud of horses here, Mr. Jarrett, which I take it will enable you to see as much of the sport as you like. I'm no great *connoisseur* in such matters myself, but I always heard that no one was so famous for the quality of his cattle as my late respected client."

"Ah! poor chap!" exclaimed Bob, his face growing suddenly grave, "I was quite forgetting about him. Of course, never having known him makes a lot of difference; nevertheless it seems horrid of me to be looking forward to riding his gees, when he is hardly cold in his grave."

"It does strike one as rather soon, certainly," acquiesced Mr. Tomlinson.

Bob stuck his hands into his trouser pockets, and for a second appeared to be revolving some mental problem. It did not take him long to come to a solution, for in another minute he said, speaking decisively, as if to convince himself as well as his hearer:

"It's impossible to pretend to have any personal feeling for a man who is an absolute stranger to you. Of course, I am sorry my uncle's death should have occurred; but if I were to go about in sackcloth and ashes, then I should feel like a most tremendous humbug. Besides," and his face lit up with youthful enthusiasm, "I can't help wanting to hunt when I get the chance. By-the-by, do you happen to know when the hounds meet again?"

"I really have no idea," returned Mr. Tomlinson disapprovingly; for Bob's manners were not at all in accordance with his notions of what those of a gentleman occupying his client's present important position should be. "You know, Matthews, no doubt?" and he turned interrogatively towards Captain Straightem's stud-groom, who up till now had stood silently by, looking at his new master with a very dubious expression of countenance.

If Matthews was anything, Matthews was conservative, and like Mr. Tomlinson, he perceived a good deal in Bob's aspect and attire not exactly in accordance with his ideas of the appearance a real "out-and-out swell" should present.

"Yes, sir," he said in answer to the lawyer's inquiry. "'Ounds don't go out 'afore Monday week, and," *sotto-voce*, "they would not go then, if Lord Littelbrane had his way."

"Not before Monday week!" exclaimed Bob, with a shade of disappointment. "Then I shall be obliged to curb my impatience. However," addressing Matthews in his quick, bright way, "I've already made up my mind which horse I shall ride."

"Indeed, sir!" said the stud-groom, not without a touch of irony. "May I make so bold as to inquire your choice?"

"Yes;" said Bob, "this is the animal that takes my fancy. I don't set up for an authority, but according to my views, he's the pick of the whole basket," and so saying, he opened the door of the nearest box, in which was standing a most admirably shaped and perfectly proportioned chestnut.

"You're not far out, sir," said the old groom, with a pleased smile beginning to steal over his face. "I see as 'ow you knows a good hoss when you see him."

"I ought to," replied Bob; "for one way and another, I have had plenty to do with horses. What do you call this handsome fellow?"

"Kingfisher, sir."

"And not half a bad name, though he is such a thorough gentleman that he ought to have been 'The King' without the 'fisher.' But, I say," suddenly bending down and inspecting a couple of half-healed wales on the good horse's forearms, "what's the matter here? He looks as if he had been in the wars."

Matthews' naturally impassive face began to twitch.

"This, sir," he said, in a curiously subdued voice, "is the animal on which Captain Straightem met his death. Kingfisher was his favourite mount—and rightly so—for a finer hunter never looked through a bridle. But," with a sigh, "the hoss has got a bad name now, and I'm afraid it will stick to him all his life, though he don't deserve it—not one bit. It was no fault of his that the master came to grief; and I tell you, sir, I went to look at the fence. I could see the hoof-marks where Kingfisher took off; but that there infernal wire was quite three yards away from the hedge. No animal living could have cleared it. But—there—there, I can't bear to think of it all."

And so saying, Matthews, totally overcome by the recent sad occurrence, and by the stigma which he imagined would attach to his favourite horse henceforth and for ever, turned sharply away so as to hide two great tears that were coursing slowly down his weatherbeaten cheeks.

Up till now Bob had taken somewhat of a dislike to the man.

He fancied that he was airified and stuck-up; but as he listened to the husky tones in which Matthews concluded the above speech, his heart grew suddenly soft, and yielding to a kindly impulse, he laid his hand on the old groom's shoulder.

"Look here, my man," he said, glancing down at him with a pair of bright, yet compassionate eyes, "you don't cotton over and above much to me, I know. One always feels these sort of things without being told 'em. From all I hear, you have had a very good master, and therefore I, for one, say you are quite right not to welcome a new one in too much of a hurry."

"It ain't that exactly, sir," interrupted Matthews with evident embarrassment; "leastways, not altogether."

"Well, never mind; we need not go into all the ins and outs just now, but I can make a pretty shrewd guess as to your feelings, and, by jingo, were I in your place I should feel exactly the same. Moreover, Matthews, I can see quite plainly that you're not easy in your mind about Kingfisher. You think after what has happened, I shall probably want to sell him."

"Oh, sir, but you've just guessed my thoughts entirely," and once more Matthews' eyes began to blink suspiciously, whilst he cleared his throat with evident effort.

"Now look here," said Bob, "I daresay I'm very far from being the sort of master you have been accustomed to; but that ain't my fault any more than it is yours. I may be rough; nevertheless, when I say a thing I mean it; and I give you my word of honour that the chestnut shall never pass into strange hands. I know without being told what a good horse he is. I will keep him and ride him fairly, just as if all this bad business had never happened; and when he gets too old for work, and past picking up a comfortable livelihood in the green fields, then we'll just send a bullet through the poor fellow's head and put him out of his misery. There, does that satisfy you?" and Bob looked the stud-groom straight in the face.

All of a sudden, Matthews seized Bob's hand and began jerking it up and down, exactly as if he were at work on a pump-handle. This process lasted several seconds. At last he found voice enough to say huskily:

"God bless you, sir, for those kind words. They show that you have got a good heart. And it would just about have broken me down to have seen the best horse in this, or any county, put up for sale at public auction. I bred him myself; handled and broke him in. Nobody except me and my poor master ever knew how good he was. Oh, dear! oh, dear! the thought of losing Kingfisher as well as Captain Straightem has pretty nigh drove me mad," and he wiped his brow with a red cotton handkerchief.

"My poor old chap, don't give the matter another thought. I have promised not to sell the horse, and nothing shall induce me to do so."

And so saying, Bob, who was himself beginning to feel a little affected by Matthews' emotion, left the stables and strolled leisurely towards the house.

Matthews looked after him long and critically.

"Yes," he muttered to himself, "he may be a bit rough—in fact, he *is* rough. There ain't one man in a thousand as has got the captain's beautiful, soft, lazy manner; but for all that, he's not half a bad sort of gent. Anyway, I intend to do my dooty by him and be all on the square. I'll let no one rob him if I can help it."

And later on, if Matthews ever heard a disparaging word about Bob uttered in his presence, he always looked severely at the offender, and said:

"You're talking of what you know nothing about. Now I can tell you for a fact that Mr. Jarrett is a truer gentleman than many of those as thinks a lot more of themselves and is not half so good in reality."

CHAPTER VIII.

LONGING FOR A RIDE.

A WEEK passed slowly away, and never in his life had Robert P. Jarrett, Esq., felt more thoroughly bored and altogether miserable. His new prosperity sat uneasily upon him. He missed the simple laborious open air life to which he had been accustomed. If he attempted to do the most ordinary thing for himself, he found that there was nearly always, within arm's reach, some individual whose duty it was to perform that thing, and who felt aggrieved and astonished by "The Master" encroaching upon his or her rights and privileges.

To be thus waited upon, might soon have grown bearable to one unaccustomed to luxury, had the particular thing only been well done. But this it never was.

To take one small instance amongst many.

Bob had always been in the habit of sharpening his own razors. It is possible that they were not invariably perfectly stropped, but at any rate, he sharpened them to his entire satisfaction. But now he was no longer allowed to continue this practice. The gentleman of the padded calves took charge of his shaving apparatus, and professed to honour it with his personal supervision. The consequence was that never before had Bob's chin suffered to such an extent. Hardly a morning passed without its receiving some injury of a painful and unsightly nature.

His clothes were another source of annoyance.

They were constantly being folded up and put away in drawers and cupboards whose very existence he knew nothing of. To

find any particular garment was like looking for a needle in a barrel of bran. It was enough for him to place an entirely clean pocket handkerchief in his pocket over night to discover it, after a long search, deposited next morning in the dirty linen basket, along with socks worn for three or four hours only, collars that had not a stain or a disfiguring mark upon them, and shirts that looked as if they had just returned from the washerwoman's hands.

Now these things, although trifles, were trifles utterly opposed to Bob's habits, principles and education. He had a horror of waste, but more especially of that waste so seldom considered, *i.e.*, the needless expenditure of human labour and of human vitality. His theory was, that people should use their heads and save their hands.

"*Think* what you have got to do, and then do it!" he often said to the men employed on his farm; "but never put out your strength needlessly. For instance, I drop a handkerchief and a knife out of my pocket; if I am wise, I pick them both up together. The one action of stooping answers a double purpose; but a foolish man will pick up first the one and then the other. Instead of bending down once, he bends twice, and by so doing expends physical force, which with a very little consideration might have been economized."

Bob's theories were, no doubt, all very well in their way, but he had not been four and twenty hours in the mother country before discovering that, when tested, they were practically useless. It seemed to him that many of the lower classes in England had never been *taught to think*. At least, that was the only way he could account for their stupidity. As for the domestic servants at Straightem Court, they almost maddened him. One and all lived in a little narrow groove, filling their stomachs and starving their intellects, and performing their daily tasks without an atom of forethought or intelligence.

Perhaps it was because Bob had been brought up as a very poor man that habits of waste, luxury and expenditure did not come easily to him when he suddenly found himself placed in the position of a rich one.

To have plenty of money at one's command, no doubt was pleasant; but there were certain accompaniments of fortune which appeared almost intolerable to the simply reared Australian.

And amongst the most intolerable, strange to say, he classed his daily meals.

To eat breakfast, luncheon and dinner in stately solitude, and be solemnly stared at and execrably waited upon by a couple of stolid men-servants, was almost more than he could stand. Over and over again he felt as if he *must* jump up from the table—they were so horribly slow—and just take what he wanted, independent of the fuss and the dignity and the needless procrastination. It set

every nerve on tension, and filled him with a mad desire to kick butler and footman out of the room, and dispense with their services altogether.

At such times he felt extremely home-sick and his thoughts would wander off to the pleasant, sociable meals of Australia. In his mind's eye he could see his mother sitting at one end of the table, smiling tenderly at him. He could see himself occupying the seat opposite, and all the bright, eager, healthy happy faces of his young brothers and sisters, as they crowded round the board and looked up to him as the head of the family.

Once more he heard the merry hum of voices and peals of light-hearted laughter, mixing with the clatter of knives and forks, whilst from the oldest to the youngest each tried to supply not only his own, but also his neighbour's wants. There was little enough of ceremony about those dinners. And yet how jolly they were! How entirely free from silly, unmeaning conventionality. Bob told himself he would rather eat a mutton chop over there than partake of Lord Mayor's fare at Straightem Court; in fact, he became so nervous, that he positively dreaded the long, dull stately banquets, eaten amidst outward surroundings of magnificence, but with an inward sense of intense discomfort and annoyance.

True, he had only to express a wish for the men-servants to retire; but that was precisely what he dared not do. He knew he was raw, he knew he was ignorant, and in his innermost heart burned a consuming ambition in all things to imitate the habits and customs of a real county gentleman.

"If I am to live here in future," he mused, with the common sense characteristic of him, "I must get to be one of them. I can tell by my own feelings that I've got the deuce of a lot to learn. It's queer that so many of these English habits should go so much against the grain with me, but I'll force myself to fall in with them all the same."

It was a brave resolution, rendered the more so because he had to exercise an immense amount of will-power to put it into force, besides a good deal of self control, and what—to him—was personal inconvenience.

Liberty had been the one predominating feature of his Colonial life. The bonds imposed by civilization had hitherto sat lightly upon him. He was a child of the soil, of the sun, of the sky, of the wind; and as such, free and unconventional. To speak the truth and do your duty appeared to him better than all the most subtle and specious of religions.

And now he felt cramped and limited, like a man confined in a strait jacket. He panted for air, for space. England seemed to him great and yet small: great in her commercial activity, her factories, her vast and busy emporiums; but small, in that she could not see how her love of comfort, of luxury and pleasure, was

like the Romans of old, slowly but surely bringing about her downfall. The nation wanted rousing; like an over-fed child, it was surfeited and sick.

Then in the midst of these tragically severe reflections, Bob's mind would dart off again to home. He thought of his favourite sister; dear, bright-eyed good-natured Belle, who was always ready with sympathy on every occasion, and to whom he invariably confided all his sorrows and disappointments. Little Tottie too, with her rosy face, and comical upturned nose. How he wished they were with him. He began to long for somebody to talk to. For Mr. Tomlinson had left, and Bob, who was not accustomed to his own society, quickly wearied of it and pined for companionship.

He missed the occupations of his everyday life on the farm; and unacquainted as yet with his new duties, he wandered aimlessly about from house to stable, from stable to garden, and from garden to outbuildings.

He would have given a ten pound note to set to work and dress a horse, dig a potato bed, or round up the cattle in the big green undulating fields.

But although Englishmen might condescend to such occupations in other countries, they could not do so in their own. Caste and custom equally forbade it.

At last this long, long week came to an end, and the meets of the Morbey Anstead hounds were once more advertised in the papers.

Bob's spirits rose as he conned them over; the depression which had crept over him vanished. Once more he was all eagerness and expectation.

His intense wish to go out with a first-rate pack of English fox-hounds, and judge for himself what the national sport was really like, at length appeared in a fair way of being fulfilled. He looked forward to this novel experience with all the ardour of a child.

November the fifteenth broke very differently from November the first.

The one day had been made up of gloom and fog, the other was as brilliant as a blue sky and clear sunshine could render it. A soft air blew, the fields were vividly green, the hedgerows only just beginning to change colour, and but for a few fluttering leaves falling with light irregular motion to the ground, one might have fancied that summer was still lingering, loth to take a seven months' farewell of Mother Earth.

On this eventful morning Bob woke early, and spent an unusual time over his toilet. To tell the truth, until now he had never given it a thought.

But alas! there were many difficulties in the way such as he had not dreamt of.

These, perhaps, may be better understood when it is hinted that he possessed neither breeches nor boots. The necessity of such articles had not occurred to him, and even now he did not consider them to be of very paramount importance.

But his state of mental serenity soon received a severe shock.

Charles the solemn, Charles the lethargic, Charles the padded, was he who dealt the blow. He informed his master that without such articles of costume he could not possibly be seen in the hunting field.

"Why, bless my heart alive," expostulated Bob, with considerable animation, "when we go kangaroo-chasing in Australia, we none of us care twopence what we wear. We think only of the sport, not of our clothes."

"Yes, sir, I suppose so, sir," answered Charles, not yielding an inch from the position he had assumed.

"Why! have you ever been out there?" asked Bob quickly.

"No, sir; never, sir."

"Then what made you say, 'I suppose so.'"

"Because," said Charles with a huge accession of dignity, "I imagined that them sort of ways was good enough for the Colonies, but they don't do over here. Gents is more pertikler."

"How do you mean? I don't quite understand."

"They likes to *look* like gentlemen," responded Charles unsympathetically.

This answer had an exceedingly dispiriting effect upon Bob. He wondered what Charles meant by it? Did he intend to say that no man could look like a gentleman unless he wore boots and breeches out hunting, or was the remark applicable only to himself?

"What the dickens am I to do, then?" he enquired despondently.

Charles scratched his head; an operation which apparently furnished him with an idea.

"Couldn't you get into some of Captain Straightem's breeches?" he suggested. "You and he are about of a size, though you ain't shaped exactly alike."

But Bob firmly repudiated this notion.

It seemed to him quite sufficient to step into the dead man's shoes, inherit his property, and ride his horses. He drew the line at wearing his clothes. There was something unnatural and repulsive in the thought.

"No, no; of course I couldn't," he answered indignantly. "I'd sooner cut my throat first. Don't mention it again." And he looked sternly at Charles.

The latter, though infinitely disgusted, gave up the point, but not before he had succeeded in detracting considerably from Bob's pleasure, and making him feel on thoroughly bad terms with himself.

Finally, after much hesitation, and still more perplexity, Susan the housemaid was politely called for, and requested to sew on two elastic straps to the hem of Bob's everyday trousers. With this contrivance, he devoutly hoped his pantaloons would stop in their place.

Nevertheless, a species of subdued irritation pervaded his being.

Charles' remarks had left their sting, and the supercilious smile which wreathed his fat and oily countenance, whilst the straps were being adjusted, still further served to incense Bob and to increase his anxieties as to his "get up."

He had very little personal vanity, perhaps because as yet it had never been called into play. Clothes, as clothes, had not formed one of the chief studies of his life, as they do of the modern "Masher."

The cut of his coat, the sit of his collars, the glaze of his cuffs, and elegance of his cane, had seldom given him more than a passing thought; but now, all at once, he began to conceive of the immense benefits which such important items confer upon a man moving, or aspiring to move, in good English society. When, eventually, he sallied forth, he could not help confessing to himself that even Charles' opinion carried weight. He would have felt many degrees easier in his mind could he but have been convinced of that individual's approval instead of his undisguised scorn.

The influences of the mother country were already at work; and Bob was soon destined to learn how important a factor dress is in the hunting field, and how often by it, and it alone, men are judged, accepted or rejected.

Ties, bows, buttons, breeches. Who can affect to despise ye?

Across Bob's mind flashed a little incident, which long ago he remembered having read in some English magazine. The words recurred to him vividly.

"A man once came out hunting who did not see fit to wear a white collar. In its place he sported a blue spotted comforter, which he wound several times round his thick purple neck. Now that man never got on. He was cut by the county. Nobody knew him. Nobody called upon him. Nobody dreamt of asking him to dinner. The reason? Oh! the reason was simple enough. The comforter damned him. He might have been ever so good a fellow, but not a soul would take the trouble to find out what a person was like who was rash enough to dispense with white collars."

This passage seemed, under present circumstances, so well adapted to himself, that Bob's spirits sank away to nothing at all.

Thank goodness! he *had* on a well glazed collar, but then it was of a turn-down shape, which Charles strongly condemned; and to make matters worse, his tie was blue, and spotted also.

As for his nether limbs, when he thought of those two elastic

straps, and how all his enjoyment and moral peace depended upon their standing the strain to which they were subjected, he really had not courage to glance at them.

He could not refrain from gloomy misgiving.

For what if they were to give way? In what position should he then be placed? Torturing visions of creased socks, shortened trousers, and white legs, rose to his mind and thrilled it with unutterable dismay.

But he was fairly started now, and of all his retainers, old Matthews had been the only one to administer a crumb of comfort.

Bob, as already related, desired to ride Kingfisher, but Kingfisher's wounds were not yet healed, and Matthews had recommended a fine, upstanding bay in his place, named The Swell.

"Is he a good 'un?" asked Bob with some curiosity.

"Yes, sir, a ripper, particularly at timber. You can ride him with confidence. He has but one fault."

"Any objection to stating it, Matthews?"

"No, sir, not in the least. He won't face water."

"Oh! won't he. The beggar! Not even if he is made to?"

"Not even if he is made to," responded Matthews gravely. "The man who rode him last was not one to put up with any denial. 'Owever, we have so few brooks in these parts, that The Swell's little peequiliarity don't so much signify."

So Bob mounted his hunter and rode off.

He was accustomed to horse exercise, and had constantly been in the habit of galloping from one end of his farm to the other, but he was *not* accustomed to the easy paces and springy action of the animal he now for the first time bestrode.

In ten minutes he had forgotten all about the vexations with which his day had begun. As he entered a grass field, and let The Swell stride along over the ridge and furrow, he thought that in his whole life he had never experienced a more perfect and exhilarating sensation.

He had decided to ride his hunter out to covert, the meet being within a couple of miles of Straightem Court. But short as was the distance, it proved sufficient to put him on good terms with The Swell, and inspire him with confidence in his mount.

As he trotted down a long, straggly street, bordered on either side by small shops and unevenly built cottages, which went by the name of Morton village (the fixture for the day), and watched the women and children clustering round the doorways, a smile spread slowly over his countenance.

Everything was new to him; everything a source of interest, wonderment or amusement.

Unconscious of the fiat which had gone forth against him in the names of Lord Littelbrane and General Prosieboy, he looked

forward with keen delight to his introduction to an English field and to a pack of well-bred, well-trained English fox-hounds.

Every nerve in his body was quivering with suppressed excitement.

It seemed to him that surely this would prove a red-letter day in his life, ever to be looked back upon with gratifying recollections.

Poor, foolish young man ! He had yet to learn that no pleasure equals the pleasure of anticipation—that joyous picturing of the imagination, which stern reality strips of its fancies, just as approaching winter strips the pretty many-coloured hedgerows.

(To be continued.)

IRISH SKETCHES.

By S. LAING,

AUTHOR OF "MODERN SCIENCE AND MODERN THOUGHT," "A MODERN ZOROASTRIAN," ETC.

A LOVE of the noble sport of salmon fishing has led me, for some years back, to spend a good deal of my holidays in Ireland. I have been a keen sportsman all my life and, believe me, there is only one thing more exciting than a fight with a big Shannon salmon. I caught one of 36lbs last month on a small fly and single gut which gave me forty minutes' hard play, with half the population of the little town looking on, and following in procession as the monster was carried up to be weighed. When the bout was over and I sat on the bank to rest my aching arms and smoke a cigarette, I said to myself, there is nothing to beat this except forty minutes with the Pytchley or Sir Bache Cunard when you find yourself on your favourite hunter coming to the front after the first burst is over, and you find man after man dropping behind as they shirk awkward fences, until you work your way to a good place, close to the hounds, and when the fox is run into and you look round you find yourself among the first half-dozen or dozen among the 200 or 300 who started.

But these delights are no longer for me. "*Solve senescentem*" is a maxim which applies to man as well as horse; and when on the wrong side of the Scriptural three-score and ten, after having ridden fairly hard for years, you find that you have no longer strength left to thrust through a thick bullfinch, it is better to give up hunting altogether than to go on pottering along roads and looking out for gates and gaps.

But fishing is pre-eminently an old man's sport. It gives him exercise and excitement without fatigue, while the pure air, the rushing river, the grassy slopes, distant mountains and passing clouds, keep alive that love of Nature which, while a man keeps fresh he never feels old, and in my case I might add :

" And hearing oft
The still sad music of humanity."

For this love of fishing has led me to see a great deal of the poor Irish peasants, and seeing them, to pity and sympathize with them. Moved by these feelings, I have thought it might interest

some readers to record some of the scenes and experiences I have come across in Ireland. I do so in what may be called a few photographic sketches from life rather than in any connected argument or essay. Such an essay would almost inevitably take the form of a political pamphlet, and I am anxious as far as possible to keep clear of politics. I never was a keen party man, and now my political as well as my hunting career is over. I can no more sit in the House of Commons night after night, to take a part in critical divisions, than I can negotiate the Billesdon brook or take one of the Harborough double-oxers. And I feel that Liberals and Conservatives have both been to blame for the past, and would both be anxious to repair it if they could see the real facts as I have seen them, and cross-examine on the spot, as I have cross-examined, "all sorts and conditions of men," landlords and tenants, priests and peasants. I feel certain that any intelligent and fair-minded Conservative who spent a month in any of the poor districts of Ireland would return feeling just as much indignation as I do at the idea of English law and English bayonets being employed to bolster up by coercion such a state of things as they found actually existing.

With this preface I proceed with my sketches.

WHAT FIRST OPENED MY EYES TO THE IRISH QUESTION.

I HAD been fishing at Killarney one Easter, and found myself one afternoon at the lower end of the lake. It was a late spring, and a bitterly cold north-east wind was blowing, with passing showers of hail and sleet, so that I was glad to land and creep under the shelter of some bushes to eat my lunch. Presently I was aware of a sort of crooning sound beyond the bushes, and looking up I saw an old man and a young woman at work trenching a bit of the mountain side to make a potato plot. It was downright hard work, the soil being a tenacious clay and full of big stones and boulders. The old man was the picture of misery as he shivered in the biting blast, with his poor tatters of clothes fluttering about him as thin as the sere leaves in chill October. The daughter was bare-headed and bare-legged, but stout and rather comely, and the poor creature was lightening her labour by crooning an Irish song, while she tried to move an extra big stone deeply embedded in the clay. The scene was so pathetic that I could not help giving them half-a-crown and half my luncheon. While they ate it I questioned the man as to his history. Where did he live? He pointed out a little hut which might have been mistaken for one of the larger boulders. What land had he? A little patch of about two acres, of which a few perches were in potatoes. Who built the hut and reclaimed the land? He him-

self with his own hands. What rent did he pay? Three pounds. How did he live? He kept a pig, three goats and four geese and worked as a day-labourer for adjoining farmers whenever he got a chance. What wages did he get? Eighteenpence a day, but he could only get work on the average for about ninety days in the year. This opened my eyes to several facts. First, the rent was altogether exorbitant; secondly, it was levied entirely on his own improvements; thirdly, he had no choice but to pay or promise to pay it, for he had nothing to fall back upon but precarious employment at eighteenpence a day for ninety days in the year.

I have since seen a great deal of poor districts in Kerry, Clare, Galway, Mayo and Donegal and I have found everywhere the same story. There are a few exceptions in districts where the soil is better and the holdings larger, and where there happens to be a benevolent landlord who lives on his estate and is good to his people. But throughout nine-tenths of the West of Ireland, and elsewhere, wherever there are small holdings on barren land, it is the same story :

1. Extravagant rack-rents.
2. Levied on tenants' own improvements.
3. Utter helplessness on the part of tenants who have nothing to fall back upon.

Of these the second is the main root of bitterness. Rack-rents they are used to, and have come to consider it the natural order of things that they should live from one year's end to another on scanty rations of potatoes and yellow meal; but that as fast as they make improvements, build an extra room to their cottage, or a cow-shed, or reclaim an extra half-acre from the stony waste or swampy bog, they should have their rents raised on them, exasperates them with a burning sense of injustice. I recollect once talking to an old man whom I met on the road near Leenane, in county Mayo, who told me the old old story which I had heard a hundred times; and when I asked him why he stood it and clung to his little holding instead of emigrating while he was young and strong, he made this remarkable reply, which has remained fixed in my memory—"Shure, your honour, when I was young we were like dogs chained to a post. We knew nothing, and could hardly speak a word of English, but our children have got education, and, please God, they will have a better time." And this is the naked truth. The new generation are as different as possible from the old, and the National schools are really the training schools for Land and National Leagues and political agitation. If you want to restore what is called "law and order" in Ireland, you must begin by shutting up the schools, gagging the press and making it penal to read or write without a license from the resident magistrate. And, as a matter of course, you must disfranchise Ireland, for until you do this

you must lay your account with having 85 Irish members out of 100 bitterly hostile to you returned without a contest or by enormous majorities in every county and borough in Ireland except in Dublin University, Belfast and two or three counties in Ulster.

I have seen several Home Rule meetings and what impressed me most was the apparent respectability of those who attended them. They were not the poor, starving, barefooted labourers, but for all the world just like what you might see flocking to the kirk on a Sacrament Sunday in the Lothians or Aberdeenshire—a well-appointed volunteer band in front playing national airs, a troop of substantial mounted farmers next, and then a mass of decently-dressed men and women marching in perfect order, but towards the tail melting off into a miscellaneous crowd, followed by a lot of little boys and girls cheering at the top of their voices.

It may be right or wrong to suppress these leagues and demonstrations, but it is useless to shut your eyes to the fact that they represent the feelings of the middle classes and intelligent artisans and mechanics of Ireland quite as much or more than they do that of the poorer masses. I will mention another fact which impressed me greatly. In a certain district of Ireland where I resided for some time, and where nine-tenths of the population are Catholic, the committee of the National League consisted of seven members of whom three were Protestants, and the leading spirit in it, I was told, was a Presbyterian Scotch farmer, who had come over, taken a large farm, and been ill-treated or fancied himself ill-treated by his landlord.

This brings me to another point which has impressed me most forcibly—the almost complete obliteration of religious animosity everywhere, except in a few of the Orange counties of the North. Wherever I have been I have found the best possible feeling between Protestants and Catholics. The only difference I could detect was that where there was a bad landlord the feeling against him was rather stronger if he happened to be a Catholic than if he were a Protestant. The very best and most popular landlord I have come across is a Protestant and staunch old-fashioned Tory. But he resides among his people, never raised his rents (which were very moderate until the recent fall of prices), helps them with money and materials to improve their houses and holdings, assists them in sickness or misfortune, and in a word behaves like a Christian gentleman who recognizes that land has its duties as well as its rights. Verily he has his reward, for when there was a talk of disturbances some time ago, a hundred of the Catholic tenants of this Protestant Tory went up to his residence with stout sticks in their hands and offered their services as a guard to protect it. He simply laughed at their fears, for he felt safer in his house in Tipperary than I do in mine, within twenty-five miles of London. The London newspapers give such an account of outrages that I have been seriously asked by friends

if I thought I was doing my duty to my family in exposing myself to such danger as I incur by going to Ireland. I can only say that there is not a proclaimed district in Ireland in which I would not rather find myself alone on a dark night than I would on the Thames Embankment.

I will conclude this head of the decay of religious animosity by quoting one instance which occurred not twelve months ago in the town of Sligo, where Protestants and Catholics are pretty equally divided. Two drunken Catholic blackguards defaced the front of the Catholic cathedral in the hope of getting a job of work as masons in repairing it; and, to escape detection, got up the story that it was done by Protestants. A riot occurred, in which these men were ringleaders, in the course of which windows were broken and damage done to a number of Protestant houses. Of course the owners were entitled to compensation out of the general borough rates. But when the story was exposed, the Catholics said, "It is not fair to make the Protestant ratepayers pay for the crime of these Catholic blackguards," and they made a voluntary rate, confined to Catholics, to pay for the damage. Compare this with the savage fury of the Belfast mob of Orangemen who showed their loyalty by assaulting and murdering Her Majesty's soldiers and police for endeavouring to keep the peace and protect Catholic houses.

HOW TO COMFORT THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOW IN THEIR AFFLICTION.

How this Christian precept is carried out in too many cases in Ireland may be best judged of if I photograph in words, two or three instances which I have seen with my own eyes within the last few weeks, and which are typical of the hundreds and thousands of similar cases in other parts of the country.

I visited Bodyke the other day, which has become famous as the scene of the recent eviction campaign, in which an invading army of soldiers and policemen stormed twenty little forts after a gallant resistance and cast the defenders, with their wives and children and aged and infirm parents, out on the road side, from the houses they had built with their own hands, for the crime of not paying impossible rents. On the outskirts of the estate there stood a little hut. On one side of it is a mountain called Knockbreck, or the Speckled Hill, because it is as thickly covered with stones and boulders as a trout's back is with spots; on the other side a dreary, black peat-bog. Toiling up from the bog, I saw an elderly woman and a boy with great baskets of turf on their backs. She was a decent-looking woman, but with that dazed look as of a hunted hare about her grey Irish eyes, which once seen is never forgotten, and tells, more eloquently than words, of a life of semi-

starvation and hopeless misery. I inquired her story, which she told me with her own lips, and which was confirmed by the parish priest and another intelligent witness who were with me. It was this:—Four years ago she was the wife of a little farmer, who, as things go in this district, was fairly well off. They held two little farms, of seven acres each, at the exorbitant rent of £20 a year. But they managed to struggle on while the husband lived and prices kept up to the old standard. The husband died, prices fell and the widow got into arrear with the rent. She pleaded hard to be allowed to give up one of her little farms for her arrears, and to remain in the other at a reduced rent so as to keep a roof over the head of her six children. But no; she was evicted and flung out of the house her husband had built on the roadside with as little ceremony as if she and her children had been the sweepings of her own floor. And then she might have died had not the priest and charitable neighbours built this little hut for her, where she lived, as she expressed it, “alone with God and the Holy Virgin,” on an allowance of two shillings and sixpence a week from the Poor Law Board and the trifle she could make by cutting and selling peats. The landlord, I am happy to say, never got a penny of rent for the two farms from that day to this, for no one would take them, and they are now common lands over which the cattle of the neighbours roam at pleasure.

Now for another photograph. I was walking the other day up a rough road to the verge of the mountain, when I met an old woman of seventy and got into conversation with her. She was a widow, with seven orphan grandchildren, who occupied a small farm on another estate, not Bodyke, I need hardly say at an exorbitant rent. Not content with this rent, the landlord had actually had the meanness to measure a little strip of about half an acre, mostly of bare rock, that lay along the roadside between it and the boundary fence, and make her pay additional rent for it at the rate of £1 an acre. The poor woman had supported herself and her grandchildren mainly by keeping a pig and two cows and selling the milk in the neighbouring village. She told me that for twenty years she had not missed a day, summer or winter, wet or dry, in carrying her pail two miles down a steep road and two miles up again. But latterly she had become crippled by rheumatism, prices had been bad, and she had fallen into arrear with her rent, and now she had been served with a writ of eviction and expected to be turned out of her house. Of course the house had been built and the land reclaimed by her deceased husband. That goes without saying, it is so universally the case; and of course also, it had been paid for many times over by past rents in excess of any fair valuation.

One more case. When at Bodyke, I looked in at the Girls' National School and heard some of the classes read. Many of the little things of eight or nine read and spelt better than a good

many boys whom I have known of nine or ten, whose parents had been paying £150 or £200 a year for their education at preparatory schools in England. One bright little maiden I noticed as about the best reader in her class, though she was the smallest. The schoolmistress whispered to me that she was one of a family of five, whose mother had been rendered insane by the horrors of the eviction and was now in the County Lunatic Asylum. This led to the little girls whose parents had been evicted being called up, and some twenty or thirty of them came up, who, as the scene was described to me, had been chucked out by the Emergency roughs along with the furniture, and sat about on the roadside, crying out their little eyes and frightened out of their little wits.

I know if I had done these things in my own county of Orkney, instead of representing it in Parliament, I should have been hooted out of it, and I should have been haunted in my dreams and on my death-bed by the eyes of the widows and the wailings of the orphans.

“NON ANGLI SED ANGELI.”

THIS pun of Pope Gregory's, inspired by the sight of some fair-haired and rosy-cheeked English children in the slave-market at Rome, led to his mission of Augustine and the conversion of Saxon England to the Christian faith. If the children had caught cold, and had bleared eyes and snivelling noses, it is a nice question whether Augustine would have been sent and whether we should have remained to this day worshippers of Thor and Odin. This much is certain, that while reason tells us that misery is the more miserable if accompanied by deformity, practically beauty in rags commands more sympathy. I make this remark, for I am conscious that I may perhaps have been a little biassed in favour of the Irish by the good looks of the population. Before I visited the country I was under the impression that although the upper classes of Irish and the people of the more fertile and civilized counties might be a fine race, when I got into the wild West I should pretty generally see an ugly and stunted type, with projecting jaws, and foreheads like apes, villainously low. I saw nothing of the sort, but, on the contrary, very few ugly and repulsive faces outside the slums of Dublin and a singularly large proportion of pleasant ones. The Royal Irish Constabulary is certainly the handsomest body of men I ever saw in any army, and every parish in Ireland has lots of the same raw material, in the shape of fine strapping young fellows, ready to be worked up into the same finished article by a couple of months' drill and a new uniform. The type is mostly tall and thin, with long legs and slender necks, made rather for activity and endurance than for solid strength.

You rarely see a short, squat, clumsy Irishman or Irishwoman. The women are often handsome and almost always picturesque. But the beauties are the children, especially the little girls. In front of many a squalid cottage you may see little things paddling in the puddles with bare legs, and their hair blowing about their eyes, who might be little cherubs who had stepped straight out of a picture of Murillo. I once fished a good deal in a pool of the Shannon opposite to the Girls' National School, and when one o'clock came it was a sight to gladden the eyes to see the swarm of little creatures rushing out to play for an hour and eat their crust of bread or cold potato on the river bank. How they did scream and shout, and run races and roll one another down the banks just like a set of young kittens at play. But their favourite resort was a ledge of rocks which ran into the river, with pools between, to wade in and jump from one stone to another. It reminded me of the sands of Yarmouth or Margate, but there was more frank unrestrained merriment. You could see that they had no fear before their eyes of anxious mammas and scolding nurses; and although they could not all enjoy the fearful delight of wetting their shoes and stockings, for most of them had none, they made up for it by extra splashing of their petticoats. And these children, both boys and girls, are exceptionally quick-witted and intelligent. I recollect driving on a public car from Glengarriff to Kenmare, and two or three ragged little urchins ran after the car for pennies, as the custom commonly prevails where tourists mostly congregate. On the car were two middle-class Englishmen who, from their remarks, were typical specimens of the British Philistine upon whom Matthew Arnold pours such vials of indignant wrath. One said to the other, "What horrid little savages." A priest who was on the car said, "I will bet you sixpence that any one of those horrid little savages will spell any word you like to ask him." The wager was accepted and the test word was "Constantinople." The foremost little fellow at once spelt it correctly, as fast as his panting breath, for the hill was long and steep, would allow him to get out the letters, and he and his comrades went home rejoicing with a penny a-piece in their pockets. Take another instance. At the girls' school at Bodyke the other day, where I saw the evicted children, the schoolmistress told me with pride that three of her pupils had taken the chief prizes, open for competition to all Ireland, at the Albert Institute at Glasnevin. No wonder that the rising generation in Ireland grow up keen politicians and better versed in history and geography than many English boys who have spent their three or four years at Eton or Harrow. It is futile to talk of coercing such a population as long as you leave them education, newspapers and a parliamentary representation. If you go in for "thorough" you must be "thorough"—more thorough even than Cromwell, for his policy left no enduring traces, and a

generation later, if kings had been changed at the battle of the Boyne, it is more than probable that the English would have been expelled from Ireland. Instead of taking Strafford as your model you must take Nebuchadnezzar. I pronounce no opinion whether it is right or not to go in for a policy of coercing Ireland, but simply say that if you do, these are the facts which you must look in the face. You must look this fact also in the face, that as long as you coerce Ireland, the Irish, or at any rate three-fourths of them in Ireland and five or six millions in America, will be bitterly hostile to the English government. Like it or not, it is a fact which you can no more ignore than an Austrian statesman could the fact of the hostility of the Italians to Austrian rule. Now what does this imply? It implies that you must keep an army corps of 15,000 military police, and another army corps of 25,000 or 30,000 soldiers, who are locked up there, and of whom not a man could be withdrawn in case of war or menace of war with France, Russia or the United States.

The strength of an empire, in the last resort, depends on the number of strong arms ready to fight for it, less the number who, if they saw a chance, would fight against it. On the battle-field of Bodyke there stood 100 soldiers and 100 police on one side armed with rifles, and perhaps 500 stout young fellows on the other side armed with sticks. If by any means you could convert the Irish into a loyal and contented people, you could add your 200 soldiers and police as an available force on the *plus* side, and reduce the *minus* side to zero; or rather, you could enlist from these young fellows with sticks as fine a company of light infantry in a militia or line regiment as you would wish to see.

Again, I do not wish to go into political questions or say how the transformation is to be effected, but this I say, that it is quite possible. If there is one thing that impresses itself more forcibly than another on an English visitor it is that while the Irish are bitterly hostile to English law and English government, there is no animosity of race. On the contrary, the individual Englishman and individual Irishman get on together capitally. I have travelled through many of the most disturbed districts during the height of the Land League and Home Rule agitations and I can safely say that I never met with anything but courtesy and goodwill from high and low. I suppose there is not a more patient, polite and placable population in the world than that of rural Ireland. In fact they push these qualities to excess. A people of harder fibre, like the Scotch, would never have stood such a system of land laws so long. And their politeness makes them rather apt to say what they think will please you than to tell the literal truth. Ask an Irishman about the trout fishing in some mountain loch, and he will reply, "Trout is it, your honour, sure there's lashings of them; you'll often get two at every cast." While the reply of a cautious Scot would be, "It's a dour loch,

but if you chance to get a good fishing day, you'll may be catch a few." They both mean much the same thing, but have a different way of expressing it. And when I say Scot, I should except the Scottish Highlander, who is much more like the Irishman in natural politeness and a sort of instinctive poetry which makes the imagination sometimes run riot. But the Irishman is generally a shrewd, sharp-witted fellow who is far better up in politics and general information than those of the same class in most counties of England. I was talking the other day to a small farmer who was a very keen Nationalist, and asking him if he really wished for separation from England. His reply was, "We may talk a bit big now and then, but we are not such fools as to mean it seriously. Why, sir, you could starve us out in six weeks without firing a shot by simply closing Liverpool and Bristol against Irish cattle."

AN IRISH MAID OF SARAGOSSA.

IN walking over the battlefield of Bodyke the other day, and seeing its results everywhere in the form of breaches newly rebuilt, roofs propped up and fragments of broken furniture, I entered one house which was known as "the Castle," from the desperate defence it had made against the invading enemy. To my surprise I found among its inmates a stout young woman, with a comely good-humoured face, who was dressed in a new gown of plain blue cloth. I inquired how she got it, and was told that she was the girl who had animated the garrison in the defence of her father's house, and when it was breached and taken by assault, had only succumbed after a hand-to-hand struggle with three crowbar men. She had undergone a month's imprisonment in gaol, and on her liberation had received a donation of £5 and a silver medal, which she produced with as much pride as if it had been the Victoria Cross. For, strange to say, these hardened offenders are not the least penitent, and any allusion to hot water invariably produces a broad grin. I asked this girl if it was true that she had thrown hot water over the bailiffs. She replied, "Shure, sir, I never threw a dhrop of water at all; it was the boiling meal." The priest suggested that, as she was bound over to keep the peace for twelve months, it was a fine chance for some young fellow to marry her, as he would be safe of a quiet life for the first nine months. She blushed up to the roots of her hair and disclaimed any matrimonial thoughts. But the blush changed into a smile that lightened up her whole face when I suggested that, as she was such a redoubtable warrior, it would only be a prudent precaution for any young man to take.

There were perhaps half-a-dozen other girls, with their new gowns and medals, and what impressed me was the utter imbecility

of supposing that the population of two-thirds of Ireland could be converted or coerced by such proceedings. Why, there is hardly a girl in Ireland who is not envious of the fame of those heroines of Bodyke, and who would not be only too glad to imitate their example. Only last month I read the report of a case in which two little boys and a respectable young girl of fourteen were tried before a resident magistrate for the crime of intimidating a man who swore that he was not a bit intimidated. The magistrate, who was evidently a kindly man, suggested that she should be discharged on giving security not to repeat the offence, so as to avoid what he called the stigma of having been sent to gaol. But the little girl fired up, and said she would give no promise not to "boo" at an Emergency man, and would go to gaol rather; and to gaol she accordingly went as a common criminal for a fortnight.

This illustrates not only the strength of the popular feeling, but also another thing which has greatly impressed me—the utter want of touch and sympathy of the justices and magistrates, which makes them blind to the most obvious facts going on before their eyes. Here was evidently a kindly man in the seat of justice, and yet he actually believed that being sent to prison in such a cause would affix a stigma on the little girl for life, whereas it was perfectly obvious to any outsider that the danger was all the other way—that the girl's head might be turned by being placed on a pedestal of fame by her admiring neighbours. I may recall an anecdote which made a great impression on me as illustrating the want of sympathy between the governing classes and the people, which is one of the worst evils in the administration of law in Ireland.

I was talking to a resident magistrate who had been an officer in the army, and was a perfect gentleman and rather popular than otherwise in his district, and I happened to let fall some expression which implied that I took him for an Irishman. He fired up at once and said, "Surely you don't take me for Irish." I replied, "Why I thought you were one of an old Irish family." "No, sir," he said; "I am English. My ancestors came over with Cromwell." I could not help thinking how Scotchmen would feel if their resident sheriffs were taken from a class who, after their ancestors had lived in Scotland for more than two centuries, thought it an insult to be taken for Scotch.

To return to the Homeric combat at Bodyke, it would not be complete without adding that our heroine was defending her father's house, built with his own money, and for which he had paid more than its value to the landlord in the form of excessive rent beyond any fair valuation for twenty years.

The only difference I see between her and the "Maid of Saragossa" is that the one was fighting against a writ of eviction served on her native city by the king of Spain, Joseph Buona-

parte, backed by a French army, and the other in defence of her father's house against a writ backed by British soldiers and policemen.

If the poor girl acted wrongly, I suppose it was because she had been taught the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," as it reads in the Bible, and not with the addition—"except in the case of an Irish tenant whose improvements a landlord may confiscate, and it is a sin to resist him."

PAT'S BUDGET.

HAVING had a good deal to do in my time with budgets on a large scale, I have long since come to the conclusion that actual figures are the best test by which to try fallacious estimates and contradictory assurances. Accordingly, I determined to go into the actual budget of a real living Irish peasant and see how it worked out on the two sides of revenue and expenditure. I took a case which is fairly typical of the class of tenants who farm about ten acres of poor land, only this man was better off than the average, being within two miles of a small town, and having a brother and son doing well in America who have given him considerable assistance, so that his house, furniture and surroundings are far better than those of his class generally.

He has a wife and five children at home, and his eldest boy and girl have gone out to their uncle in New York and are doing well: the son, who gets good wages in a brewery, having already sent home £35 to his parents. The farm consists of 10½ Irish acres of poor land high up on the bleak mountain side and mostly unfit for anything but rough pasture. The old rent 24 years ago was £5 12s. 2d., the government Poor Law valuation being £5 5s. 0d. This rent was twice raised up to £10 3s. 0d., at which it stood until it was reduced three years ago by the Land Court to a judicial rent of £7 10s. 0d. Judging from my own experience in my own county of Orkney, I should have thought £5 a year a full rent for it before the recent fall in prices, which has reduced the selling price of the produce of such holdings nearly one-half. If he had been my tenant I should have given him a reduction of 25 or 30 per cent. on this rent without hesitation.

I forbear to give the name, for as he has been served with a notice of eviction it might prejudice him with his landlord, and I therefore use the generic appellation of "Pat." But I can vouch for the accuracy of every figure I quote, having verified them on the spot by a rigid cross-examination confirmed by two highly respectable witnesses who were with me, and who were intimately acquainted with the facts of this particular case and the circumstances of the whole country side.

With this preface, I present the figures, adding only by way

of explanation, that as the potatoes are all consumed by the family, and in a good year like the present just suffice for their consumption, I have entered their market value on each side of the account.

PAT'S BUDGET FOR 1886-7.

REVENUE.			EXPENDITURE.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Potatoes:			Rent	7	10 0
1095 stone at 2½d. per stone	11	8 0	Rates and taxes.....	1	0 0
Cattle—sold	5	0 0	Fuel—royalty for cutting turf		
Sheep—2 lambs	2	12 6	for consumption	1	5 0
Pigs—profit on after deducting			Potatoes, as per contra	11	8 6
cost	3	0 0	Flour and bread	6	16 10
Milk	6	0 0	Meat and dripping	1	0 0
			Tea and sugar	6	15 0
			Clothing, boots, shoes, &c.....	7	0 0
			Soap, candles, oil, &c., 1s. a		
			week	2	12 0
			Tobacco	1	1 6
			School fees	0	8 0
			Priest and chapel.....	0	10 0
			Total	47	6 10
			Deduct revenue	29	0 6
Total.....	29	0 6	Deficit	18	5 4

I may observe on this on the revenue side:

1. Potatoes. The produce is generally less and the price higher, but as they never have any to sell and in ordinary years have to buy more than they grow, this makes the Budget worse.
2. Live stock. This consists of three cows and a small two-year-old bullock, three sheep, three pigs and a donkey. They cannot keep more, for there is no winter food except coarse hay and a few oats, and this year they have had to buy hay and bran to keep them alive. Selling milk, they cannot rear more than one or two calves yearly and those very poor creatures. Before the great fall in prices they would have realized about twice as much for the cattle and pigs.
3. Milk. This is taken in part payment by the shopkeeper who supplies them with flour, tea, sugar, &c. They make further payments on account, but always have a balance against them.

On the expenditure side of the account, I may observe:

1. That the rent until recently was £10 3s., so that in the course of 24 years Pat has paid to his landlord £53 12s. in excess of the judicial rent; £109 in excess of the old rent; and £117 10s. in excess of the government valuation, less about

£15 now owing for arrears. And this for a house he has built and land which he has reclaimed himself, and which was not worth 2s. 6d. an acre in its original state.

2. Fuel. The royalty paid for the right to cut turf at his own risk and expense for his own consumption has been raised during the same period from 2s. 6d. to £1 5s.
3. The cost of food for the family amounts to just under 2d. per head per day. They live on three meals a day—bread or flour cakes and tea for breakfast; potatoes for dinner and supper; meat or dripping to season the potatoes on high days and holy days.

There does not seem much scope for economy in this budget, but no doubt the poorer class of tenants and labourers, comprising perhaps one-fourth of the population of Ireland, do live on less. They dispense to a great extent with flour, tea and sugar and meat, and spend perhaps a half less on clothing, miscellaneous and tobacco. Still this comes out clearly: that Sir J. Caird was right when he said that the poor holdings in Ireland of ten acres or under had no agricultural value, and that rents never have been and never can be paid from any surplus produce of the soil after giving the cultivator the minimum that will keep soul and body together, but are drawn almost entirely from extraneous sources such as aid from America. Mr. Vere Foster has assisted 18,000 Irish girls to emigrate, and these girls have sent home to their parents in five or six years no less a sum than £250,000—a great part of which has gone in paying impossible rents to absentee landlords.

I make no comment on any of the above facts, but simply present them as so many photographic sketches from the life, of the existing state of things in Ireland, as I have seen them with my own eyes.

TO-MORROW! A TRAGEDY.

By IZA DUFFUS HARDY,

AUTHOR OF "LOVE, HONOUR AND OBEY," ETC., ETC.

THE artist laid his brush aside, and looked from the portrait on which he was putting the finishing touches, to the original—looked as an artist looks on a rarely beautiful face—nay, more than that, as a man looks on the woman he loves.

"It does not do you justice," he said half sadly.

"Let me be the judge of that," she answered. "May I come now and look?"

She rose up from her chair, the one easy-chair of which Paul Norton's "den"—he never called it his "studio"—could boast. The folds of her fawn-coloured dress, some soft, clinging material—she always loved soft Oriental fabrics and subtle shades of colour—swept the floor noiselessly, as she glided round to the front of the easel; and her own face, life-size, life-coloured, "ripe and real," looked back at her from the canvas as from a mirror. He had not idealized her; he had but portrayed with graphic realism those straight and harmonious features, almost purely classic in their outline—the face of a pure egg-shaped oval, "lessening in perfect cadence" from broad, low brow to clear-cut chin; the cream-white skin and crimson lips; the hair, like woven sunshine, contrasting with the long dark lashes.

Lucy Williams had left the bloom of her first youth behind; but the rounded oval of her cheek, smooth and clear as the firm white petals of the lily, stood in no need of rose-bloom to add to its fairness. It was the face of a woman—and a woman who had *lived*, not merely grown and bloomed like the lilies of the field—the face of a goddess to Paul Norton's mind—that was framed in the waves of girlish golden hair; and those eyes, the deep, dreamy eyes of a peculiar dark and luminous grey, that were to him the eyes of an angel, another man, who was only half in love with her, had been heard to call the eyes of a sphinx; and indeed they were as unfathomable and secret as they were darkly lovely.

"So you think it does not do me justice?" she said smiling.

"No. I have missed something—a look you have sometimes—an expression I have not seized."

She cast one keen, subtle glance at him from under her long veiling eyelashes. Yes, it was true that he had missed something; but what he had missed was the shadow that lurked in the depths

of her soft, secret eyes—the shadow of tragic memory, of dark foreboding.

"You have missed nothing that I wished to see there," she replied. "I wish I always looked—like that. You have taken me with my happiest expression."

"I cannot bear to see any other expression on your face," he said gravely and tenderly.

A soft, half-sad smile just parted her beautiful lips.

"Well, I shall always look my best and brightest *here*," she remarked, lightly touching the canvas with her finger.

"Your brightest is only a sort of soft moonlight. Sunshine—the garish light of day—doesn't seem to be the thing for you; the mellow, mysterious moonlight is *your* light," he said with a sort of loving reverence. "I am sorry it is finished," he added—"sorry our sittings are over."

"Why?" she asked, dropping the little monosyllable gently as a fallen rose-leaf.

"They have been the means of our being so much together. I have been able to see so much of you alone."

"You can always see me—while we are under the same roof."

"Yes—*while*; but how long will that be?"

"You are not going away—yet?" she asked with a touch of interest, even of anxiety, stirring her habitual languor.

"If I could only think you cared a little whether I stay or go!" he exclaimed, seizing her hand. "Lucy—Lucy, many men may have loved—*must* have loved—you, but I think none can ever love you as I do. I would like to die for you. I would far rather die for you than live without you."

Her deep, soft, dreamy eyes dwelt with a sort of tender, yet half-bitter, sadness on his face.

"You say you love me," she replied. "And yet you know nothing of me—not even who I am, nor where I came from."

"And I do not care to know, if only you will stay with me," he answered passionately. "Let me have a part in your future, and forget your past. Let it be blotted out like a dream, if to think of it gives you pain. I know, Lucy, that though you live so sweetly and contentedly among my people here, you are not of *them*. You come from a different world to theirs—ours."

"If I do," she rejoined more bitterly, "I only wish to forget it."

"Lucy," he pleaded eagerly, "could you not forget it—with me? Ah, you don't know how I would cherish you if you would trust your life to me! You have been unhappy, I know. You have suffered—I can read it in your eyes. If you loved—yet what am *I* that *you* should love me?"

"Ah, what indeed?" she asked, with a curling lip of tender scorn, looking down, so that her long lashes veiled her eyes; "you are only—only the truest, noblest heart I ever met."

"You say that, Lucy?" he rejoined eagerly. "Say only one word more. Oh, my darling—if you think so of me indeed, say the one word more."

"One word?" she repeated with a mournful smile. "Ah, there would be many words to say between us if—if I——"

"But only one I care to hear," he urged, as she faltered. "Say only that you will marry me."

"I cannot—I cannot—not at once—not so suddenly," she replied with suppressed agitation.

"It is not suddenly," he protested. "I have made no secret of my love—you have known it well—you cannot be taken by surprise to-day."

"Give me till to-morrow," she said.

"No. Answer me now. If you do not care for me to-day, will you to-morrow? And if you *do*, why torture me with a whole long day and night of suspense?"

"I have often thought of telling you my story," she said, evading a direct answer.

"Be my wife, and tell me afterwards."

"Do you trust me so?"

"I love you!" was his reply.

"I think you do," she said, but rather sadly than gladly.

"Then give me your answer, dearest."

"I'll talk to you to-morrow," she replied. "The morning is gone; we have no time now. I will think over things to-day, and—and—*perhaps*——" she paused, then added with less reserve:

"You say truly; I have suffered—perhaps you may know how much—to-morrow."

Time and tide wait for no man, not even for a lover; and the Hazelmead dinner-bell now clanged out a ruthlessly noisy summons before Paul Norton could utter another word; and before the last stroke of the bell ceased chiming, there was a scuffling of children's feet in the passage, children's voices at the door, small, but energetic hands battering on the panels.

"Uncle—Uncle Paul! Miss Lucy! Dinner! dinner!" and all the Norton olive-branches trooped into the "den" and flung themselves upon Miss Williams with ursine hugs, and bore her out of the room between them, Lulie hanging round her waist, Harry pulling her along by her arm, and Amy clinging to her hand.

An early dinner was one of the time-honoured institutions at Hazelmead. The Nortons were good, plain, home-like and somewhat old-fashioned people, *very* old-fashioned, if warmth and openness and simplicity of heart be out of date. Amongst them, Lucy Williams did indeed seem like a creature from another world, with her stately statuesque beauty, so delicate, so dignified, so gentle, calm and reserved. Paul was a true Norton in heart and in general appearance; the Nortons were all tall,

comely and strong, with fine figures and fair complexions; but Paul was a trifle less robust and sanguine-looking than the rest; there was more fire and soul in his eye, more intellect on his brow. He was the flower of the flock, the family genius. They were all proud of Paul, although when first the boy's talent had pronounced itself, and he had neglected the farmyard in favour of his paint-box, and horrified his poor mother by decorating the blank white walls of her dairy with a pictorial representation of the Battle of Hastings, his parents had been inclined to regard this development of tendency as a morbid condition requiring medical treatment; and when finally, young Paul announced his fixed intent of devoting himself to Art as a profession, the family feeling had been much like that of the hen who sees the duckling she has hatched amongst her own brood, launch itself on the dangerous depths of the pond.

But that first mood of doubt and dismay and disapprobation had passed over long ago. Paul Norton was an artist, and the family admired his pictures conscientiously, albeit without in the least understanding them as works of art. Notwithstanding his having struck out a line apart from theirs, they felt that he was still one of their own; and he was one of them indeed, single-minded and simple-hearted, the rough shyness of his boyish days not entirely rubbed off by his occasional contact with the great world outside. It was only occasional; he never felt really a part of that vast, busy, thrilling, moving world, rolling on over the hearts and souls of its votaries, like the car of Juggernaut; he never felt that he belonged to it, nor that it entered into and became a part of his inner life. *His* life was in the fields and lanes, in the "merry green woods" of his childhood, the broad reaches of meadow and swelling slopes of hill and dale, the clear pure skies wherein the lark soared up singing. He paid periodical visits to London; but he drew no inspiration from crowds and fog, and smoke and noisy streets. The great city told no tale to him, though field and forest, hill and river, were full of voices. He felt that he never painted so well as at Hazelmead; it was always "*home*" to him, the only real home he knew.

His father and mother had died; the old homestead was now occupied by his sister, brother, brother's wife and children; they one and all loved Paul, and he was never so happy as when he was at home with them—especially since Lucy Williams had been an inmate of Hazelmead. It was by mere chance—a happy chance indeed, *he* deemed it—that she had come to reside there. She had arrived at a large farmhouse in the neighbourhood, where she had made arrangements to board, requiring a few weeks' change, pure country air and perfect rest. On the very day of her arrival, fever had broken out at the farm. Perplexity! here was the expected boarder with her luggage; it was neither safe nor convenient for her to stay, and there was no hotel near. The

Nortons hearing of their neighbours' dilemma, hospitably went to their assistance, and offered to receive the lady themselves.

So it was that Lucy Williams came to them—came, saw, and conquered; her beauty, grace, and sweetness won all their hearts. Mrs. Norton had been thinking of procuring a governess for her children; there were five, all in steps, from ten-year-old Tommy down to baby Amy. Miss Williams was thinking of seeking a governess's place, so she presently confided to her new friends. Her means were limited; her health required country air; she would like to find a pleasant home in the country where she could make herself useful. Said, and done! The home was found! both parties were suited: Miss Williams became a resident at Hazelmead, and Hazelmead paradise to Paul Norton—a fool's paradise perhaps! but if so, he was a happy fool as he wandered in its flowery ways. Miss Williams was quiet and reticent; there was a gentle frost of dignity and reserve about her which he found fascinating, as indeed he would have found any quality in *her*. Sometimes she seemed overshadowed by melancholy thoughts; then there was a strange enthralment about her, to Paul Norton's eyes at least. She had occasional moods of quietude; then she was enchanting; and anon she would be silent and abstracted, with a sweet, deep, dreamy gaze in her lovely eyes—then she was irresistible! She told the Nortons little about herself, seldom indeed made any allusion to her past life.

Paul really knew nothing about her; but he thought that he knew a great deal. He gathered from occasional words she dropped, that she was alone in the world, that her youth had been shadowed by trouble. He knew that she was well educated; she could speak languages to him unknown. Paul Norton had been sent to a good, plain, middle-class school, but not to college; he had just that amount of education which makes a vain man boast of how much he knows, and a modest one—as Paul was—feel bitterly how little it is! He had reason to be satisfied with what he had achieved with his one gift; but in spite of his success in his chosen career, he felt himself ignorant and awkward beside Lucy Williams, with her grace and talent and accomplishments. He knew—yes, well he knew! who knew so well as he?—her truth and goodness. Had he not seen her sweetness with the children, her patience and tenderness in nursing them through their ailments—seen her deft light fingers bandage Harry's wounded arm, and comb little Amy's golden curls? Ah, yes—her history might be a sealed book to him; but he felt he knew her well. And, *trust* her? Why, he would have laid his life down to prove his faith in her.

The short winter daylight was drawing to a close when little Minnie ran up to Miss Williams' room with a message.

"Miss Lucy! Miss Lucy! there's a strange gentleman in the

parlour, and mother says—please will you come. Auntie Jane's making the pudding, and she's just got her hands in the flour, and papa and Uncle Paul are out in the stables."

Strange gentlemen were unfrequent visitors at Hazelmead; and it was with a little surprise and curiosity—which, however, her manner did not betray—that Lucy accompanied the child to the parlour, where Mrs. Norton was carrying on an intermittent conversation with the stranger, while her knitting needles clicked busily through the work she always had in hand. She introduced Miss Williams to Mr. Beresford, looking up at the latter while she went through the brief formula. Little Minnie had run to her mother's side, and from that safe vantage-ground was staring open-eyed at the stranger. Paul was not there; there was no one to notice how Miss Williams' eye kindled and her cheek changed colour, as her glance fell upon the visitor's face.

He had risen courteously, and bowed low in greeting. He was a tall, dark, good-looking man, in the prime of life, with close-trimmed hair and beard, and a certain touch of dash and swagger in his bearing—only a *soupeçon*—just enough rather to attract than to repel an uncultivated taste.

"Miss — Williams?" he said, with a half-inquiring accent, gazing full at the Nortons' paragon governess.

"Yes—Lucy Williams," she replied, with a ring of resolute meaning in her low and almost languid tones. If there were a flash of defiance in her glance, as it met his like crossing steel, there was no eye but his that noted it.

"This gentleman has walked all the way from Thirlton," Mrs. Norton observed conversationally; "he wants to talk to Mr. Norton about that land of Higgins's; as I tell him, my husband's the right man to give him information about that."

Mr. Beresford observed politely that he was assured he could consult no better authority than Mr. Norton on the matter. A little commonplace chat followed; then it was the children's tea-time; and Mrs. Norton, with a few words of excuse, bustled off, leading Minnie, to superintend the gathering of her flock in the nursery.

The visitor and the governess were thus left alone. They looked at each other, face to face, both of them cool, unflinching of gaze; but she was white as death itself.

"Well, Lydia," he began, "you see I have come. I have found out your snug retreat."

"You came here on purpose, then? You knew I was here?"

"Most certainly I did. I told you that I should find you—when I wanted you."

"Yes; I thought that you would find me sooner or later," she said bitterly. "You never failed yet to track your prey!"

"Though I have been known to baffle those who thought them-

selves safely on *my* track, haven't I? haven't *we*, I should say," he added with an evil smile.

"It is never *we* again," she said firmly.

"You think not, my beauty? On my word, Lydia, you're as handsome as ever," he observed parenthetically. "But, if you remember, I told you that we had not done with each other."

"What do you want with me?" she demanded in a low, bitter tone; "why have you hunted me out? I walk my own way now; and it is apart from yours. I have done with you and your ways—for ever!"

"We shall see about that," he replied coolly. "I have a good deal to talk to you about, Lydia; and we must find some opportunity when we shall be safe from intruders. When and where can I talk to you—*alone*?"

When Mrs. Norton returned to the parlour, bearing her husband and her brother-in-law triumphantly along in her train, the last idea to occur to any one of them would have been that the interview they interrupted was anything out of the ordinary kind.

Lucy Williams leaned back in a low chair, just outside the circle of yellow lamplight, idly screening her face from the fire with one of the big Japanese fans off the mantelpiece. Mr. Beresford, the handsome stranger, stood before the log fire—the Nortons liked a good, old-fashioned wood-fire—pushing back a fallen log with his foot; he was looking down, but a smile was on his lips, as he thrust the smouldering wood back into the grate.

"Well, and I hope you've been entertaining this gentleman in our absence, Miss Lucy?" said the head of the household, his ruddy, kindly face beaming with good-nature—its chronic expression.

"I have done my best," answered the sweet, low, level tones that were music in Paul Norton's ear.

"Miss Lucy is capital company," said Henry Norton, who always spoke out exactly what he thought.

Mr. Beresford bent his head smilingly, with a civil speech. Paul had made his way promptly to Lucy's side, and bent over her chair, while Mr. Norton entered into conversation with the visitor, and gave him information and counsel on the subject of Higgins's land—a good deal more information than was really at all necessary.

Mrs. Norton took up her knitting; Paul presently went to the window at the further end of the long parlour, lifted the lowered blind, and looked out, and remarked that the moon was rising and the sky looked frosty, addressing the remark to Miss Williams. She accepted the hint in her graceful way. She glided across the room, and looked out of the window with Paul Norton, and listened sweetly while he talked low-voiced about the rising moon—and other things.

Mr. Beresford cast more than one glance in her direction, while he was apparently engrossed in the interesting subject of Higgins and his acres, and observed to himself:

"Just the same Lydia! The old game!"

But it was not quite the Lydia *he* knew, who stood pale in the lamplight, looking up into Paul Norton's honest eyes, later on that evening—so late, that it was good-night that they were saying, that they had slipped apart from the rest to say—yet not very late to those "of the world, worldly," for early hours were the rule at Hazelmead; and Mr. Beresford regarded the evening as only just beginning when the Nortons looked upon it as closed.

It was the face of Lydia, indeed, but not the look that Mr. Beresford had ever seen in Lydia's eyes, or on her lips, as she stood by Paul Norton's side.

"To-morrow, Lucy darling," he said, clasping her hand as if he could never let it go, "to-morrow you will give me my answer? I shall not sleep to-night for longing for to-morrow! It is Christmas Eve, you know——"

She burst into a laugh that almost startled him—not a loud laugh; Lucy's laugh was always low and soft—but with a ring of bitter mockery in it that he had not heard from those lips before—and did not like to hear.

"Yes, Christmas Eve," she said, "the season of mirth and happiness—of peace and goodwill to all men!"

"Why do you laugh, Lucy?" he asked, grasping her hand with unconscious force; "are you—no! you are not playing with me? you are not that kind of woman! But why do you speak like that? and why put me off until to-morrow? If you have nothing but 'No' to say to me, say it now—now this moment. I will not endure suspense, unless—unless it means hope? Oh, forgive me if I speak roughly to you, Lucy! I am not worthy of you, so delicate and gentle a flower!"

"Do you think you are not worthy of me?" she rejoined, with a pale smile, and her eyes dwelt on his sadly, even tenderly. "Well, I told you—I would talk to you to-morrow. So I will. But now—good-night!"

"Call me by my name to-night," he pleaded; "say good-night, Paul!"

"Paul!" she murmured, and a sudden, deep convulsive sigh heaved her bosom and caught her breath. "Good-night, dear Paul!"

"My darling!" he exclaimed, enraptured. "Oh, Lucy love, before we part to-night, mayn't I say '*My own*'?"

"If the words please you," she answered, with a curious and, to him, most unaccountable bitterness in her tone, yet not shrinking from his enfolding arms.

Then, with one of those sudden revulsions of mood which had

always characterized her—and those quick turns and transitions which were part of her fascination—she softened, sighed, and her golden head sank on his shoulder.

“Oh, Paul—I am tired, so tired!” she whispered. “Let me go now; and to-morrow——”

“To-morrow, dearest?”

“Yes, to-morrow, Paul, if you still care, you *shall* call me your own!” The words were sweet, and in their sweetness he lost note of the under-current of bitterness and defiance in her tone.

She raised her face to his. He lifted her hands and gently clasped them round his own neck as he kissed her. They closed and clung there—as if in *him* she were clinging to peace and safety, to very life itself! Happy Paul! He did not see the fixed look of anguish in her eyes as she hid her face upon his shoulder; he believed that embrace was the dawn of a life-long day of love.

The long winter's night wore away; and all the Nortons slept the deep and dreamless sleep of sound health and easy conscience; and Christmas Eve morning came—a white and azure morning of silvery frost, and cold clear sunshine.

“Merry Christmas!” shouted Tommy, rushing downstairs late to breakfast, and meeting at the breakfast-room door his beloved governess, also late. “Merry Christmas, Miss Lucy!”

“Too early, Tommy dear,” she said. “Wait till to-morrow—Christmas Day!”

“Why, my dear, how ill you look! What's the matter with you?” exclaimed Mrs. Norton, who had her husband's habit of always speaking out exactly what she thought.

Lucy smiled—a stiff, constrained, lifeless kind of smile.

“I woke up with one of my worst headaches,” she explained. Paul Norton looked at her with quick and tender anxiety.

“We must keep her very quiet to-day,” he said in an unconsciously possessive tone.

“Yes, we must have her all right for Christmas Day!” agreed his brother heartily.

Later on in the morning Paul, going in search of his love, his mind's eye on the promised interview, found her in the parlour with the children, putting up the evergreens. She had on a simple dress of nun-like grey, a little white lace at the throat and wrists. She was pale—so pale that even her lips had lost their usual scarlet bloom; the only spot of bright colour about her was her golden hair. She was standing up, tall, willowy and graceful, twisting sprays of holly into a wreath round one of the pictures on the wall. Little Amy clung to her skirts, gazing admiringly up at her as her deft hands twined the holly round the frame.

Tommy, his arms full of evergreens, stood by, handing her spray after spray. Somehow, this simple home-picture of Lucy standing

among the children there, branded itself upon Paul Norton's mind in colours never to be effaced. As she turned to meet him, no smile of greeting curved her lips; those mobile lips seemed rigid; and, pale as she was, her eyes struck him with their burning brightness—they shone with a kind of fever-light.

"Is your head better?" he asked anxiously.

"Not much."

"You shouldn't try to keep about when you have one of your bad headaches," he said sympathetically. "You exert yourself too much. Ought you not to lie down and rest?"

"If I *could* rest!" she replied. "But lying down, quiet, silence, drives me mad! I am better here."

Paul looked at the children.

He was a good uncle, and very fond of his small nephews and nieces; but just now he wished them elsewhere. He wondered whether there was any possibility of getting them all out of the way; he wanted to talk to Lucy. He was pondering whether they might not be induced to go out in the garden and pick some more holly-berries?—when his brother's voice was heard in the passage outside.

"Paul—Paul!" and the tone of the summons told him that something was amiss.

"What is it, Hal?" he said, opening the parlour door.

Henry Norton motioned to him to step out and shut the door behind him.

"There's an awful business!" Henry said in an agitated undertone. "There's a man been found murdered in the wood, close by the gate. It's that very Mr. Beresford who was here yesterday."

"Murdered? here?" exclaimed Paul in horrified amazement, but also careful not to raise his voice.

"It's too true—there he lies, shot dead, poor fellow! Come with me, Paul—we must see what's to be done."

There was a childish cry of terror and dismay from the parlour; the sound of a fall, and then Amy's voice uplifted in a burst of loud frightened sobs.

Tommy dashed open the door.

"Oh, father—uncle!—something's happened to Miss Lucy!"

Paul rushed forward. Lucy had fallen on the floor in a dead faint, her white face upturned, the holly still in her hand.

"Can she have heard what we were saying outside?" Paul exclaimed in dismay, as he knelt by her side.

"I thought we spoke quite quietly," said his brother, almost equally aghast, his florid face pale and perturbed.

"Tommy—Lulie—run and fetch your mother!"

They left Lucy, still insensible, in Mrs. Norton's care, Paul tearing himself away from her reluctantly, and indeed only being induced to accompany his brother by his sister-in-law's repeated assurances that it was only a fainting fit, which she knew perfectly

well how to manage, and could manage much better without any men hanging round.

Mr. Norton's startling tale was indeed true. There on the borders of the wood, just off the pathway, partly screened by the bushes, the body of the stranger who had presented himself as Mr. Beresford at Hazelmead the previous afternoon, lay stark and frozen among the long frosty grass and weeds. He had been shot right through the heart; and, on search being made, a pistol was found lying a few yards off—one of those small pocket deringers, which are small enough to be concealed in a lady's hand, but which carry the deadly, large conical ball. Was this terrible deed, which had fallen like a blood-red "bolt from the blue" into their peaceful life, one of suicide or murder? There was no sign of a struggle; no evidence apparent on a cursory examination, to tell the tale. Mr. Norton, of course, immediately sent information to the police, who were speedily on the spot; and on their arrival, the body was conveyed to one of the outhouses, there to await the inquest. No letters nor papers bearing any address or giving any clue to the deceased's family or residence were found upon him, so no notification of his tragic fate could be sent to his friends. Inquiries made at the "Tiger," the nearest inn to Hazelmead, elicited that the stranger had arrived there on foot the previous afternoon, had partaken of refreshment, asked the way to Mr. Norton's, and expressed his intention of returning to the "Tiger" to sleep; but, meanwhile, before this information reached Hazelmead, Paul Norton had returned to the house.

"Is Miss Lucy better?" was his first eager question.

"Oh, yes," replied Mrs. Norton, "it was just a faint; she says she was feeling very ill this morning, as indeed any one could see; and she was startled and afraid there was something wrong when Hal called you out of the parlour. She's much better now, and is lying on the dining-room sofa, quiet."

Paul went to Lucy, and bent over her with tenderest inquiries and expressions of regretful fear that his overheard conversation with his brother had given her a shock. "But I never thought you'd hear us," he said deprecatingly.

"I am so sorry I fainted and frightened you all," she murmured. "But women are weak creatures, you know," and her lips quivered suddenly into a strange smile, a pale gleam of ghastly mirth.

"Yes, we who are strong must be careful of you tenderer plants," he said, "it is *our* place to guard and shield you! Lucy, how I should prize the privilege of cherishing you if you would give it to me? I love you even more when you are pale and ill than in health and brightness!"

"Is this a time to talk of love," she answered, half averting her face, "when there's—*death*!" she shuddered, "so near!"

"Love is no child's play," he rejoined gravely, "it's one of the earnest things of life—as true and real as Death itself!"

"Who taught you that?"

"You!—it is you who have taught me what love is!"

She fixed her large grey eyes upon his with a wild, mournful, despairing gaze.

"I wonder," she said, "would you forget me if—if—I were gone away for ever?"

Paul's protestations were cut short by Mrs. Norton's appearance with a cup of strong tea for Lucy.

That evening, when Lucy was sitting with Mrs. and Miss Norton and Paul in the parlour, there was a ring at the hall-door; and on its being opened, a stranger's voice was audible in colloquy with the maid-servant—a man's voice, not loud, rather low, in fact, but with a peculiar keen, resonant quality in its tone. Lucy looked up with a violent start. Mrs. Norton listened for a few moments; then, her curiosity waxing strong, went to the door and called:

"What is it, Sarah?"

"A gentleman from London wants to speak to the master, ma'am—I've shown him into the dining room."

Mrs. Norton went out. Paul looked at Lucy.

"How you are trembling!" he said, in a low anxious voice; "are you feeling worse?"

"I'm nervous—unstrung," she answered; "the least thing startles me!"

"You are ill, I am sure," he urged, and suggested his usual panacea—"Won't you go upstairs and lie down?"

"I think I will," she murmured.

"Let me help you," he said eagerly; "lean on my arm—you can scarcely walk!" Jane Norton discreetly refrained from pressing *her* services, and left Paul to lend Lucy his strong arm up the stairs—a support which was perhaps not so necessary as *he* seemed to think. Lucy did not speak until she reached her own door, then she said, in a low hollow voice:

"Thank you; you are very good to me—always! I don't think I'll come downstairs again to-night."

"No—don't!" he said tenderly; "we shall all miss you—but lie down and try to sleep."

When Paul returned downstairs, his brother, carrying a lighted lantern, was taking the strange visitor out by the back-door.

"They've gone to see the body," said Mrs. Norton, with the grave and awe-stricken expression which seemed unnatural on her fair, fresh, comely face.

"Who is it?" asked Paul.

"His name's Dashwood—and, Paul," lowering her voice, "he's a police-officer in plain clothes down from Scotland Yard."

"From Scotland Yard? Why, surely there's not time for them to have got a fellow down from there already, even if they'd telegraphed on the instant!"

"No; it seems he hasn't come about *this* business. He didn't know of the—death. As far as I can make out, he'd come on some errand about this very Mr. Beresford, who, it appears, isn't Mr. Beresford at all! Oh dear! oh, dear! it makes my head whirl to think of! And he asked all about our household; and, Paul, he seems curious about Lucy! asked what our governess's name was, and how long she had been with us, and seemed as if he'd like to see her. Oh, Paul, I feel as if we were all getting tangled up in some dreadful mystery!"

"Some dreadful mare's-nest," he rejoined abruptly, but wincing. "It's these detectives' business to find mare's-nests," he added unjustly. "Of course, they make inquiries about all the members of a household, when any tragic affair like this has happened. But Miss Lucy is too ill to be troubled with any talk or inquiries to-night; it would be simply cruel to disturb her. The poor girl wants rest and sleep. Fanny, you good soul! you'll let her have it?"

"I am sure I'd be the last to worry her! and of course, no doubt, it is a police-officer's duty to ask all sorts of questions; but this is a dreadful Christmas Eve, Paul! I never remember such a one!" and Mrs. Norton began to weep.

She went up to see the invalid presently; and returning, assured Paul that she hadn't been worrying her at all, only bathing her head with eau-de-Cologne, and talking to her a little, and telling her to go to bed.

Excited and disturbed, they kept unusually late hours at Hazelmead that night. Paul was the last to go to his room. He had not naturally a light step, and he conscientiously tried to tread lightly as he passed by the room wherein he imagined Lucy was sleeping. But his painstaking tiptoeing was wasted care, for as he reached her door it opened softly, as if she had been watching for him.

She stood on the threshold, still in her long grey dress, her golden hair disordered; her eyes, large, dark and dilated, had a kind of wild, fixed intensity in their gaze.

"I hoped you were asleep," he said softly, looking at her with tender surprise and anxiety.

"I soon shall be. But I thought I would say good-night to you, Paul!"

"My darling!" he whispered, and fondly, reverently kissed her. "Lucy, love, go to sleep; don't fret yourself about anything; if there is anything to trouble you, we'll talk it over to-morrow. I'll not keep you now."

"Good-night," she said softly. "You have all been very kind to me here—all! You shall know what troubles me to-morrow."

"Good-night, my darling. Sleep well," he said.

A pale, strange smile lighted up her face.
"Yes," she replied, "I shall sleep well!"

* * * *

The silence of night rested like a pall upon Hazelmead, only broken by the ghastly and sinister sound of the howling of the dogs. Most of the Nortons, weary with the excitement of the day, slept soundly through it; but Paul, wakeful, felt that evil-ominous wailing jar on his every nerve—would fain have stopped his ears to shut out the baleful sound. He was restless, but towards daybreak fell into a deep slumber, from which he was aroused by a sudden inexpressible consciousness of some undefined horror and dread, which resolved itself into a sound of suppressed hysterical sobbing somewhere—a muffled murmur of horrified voices. Paul sprang up and threw on his clothes in haste. What new calamity had happened? Surely that sobbing was in his sister-in-law's voice? Yes, and he caught the words, "Keep the children in their room," and "Send for the doctor," and—what was that his brother said?—"The doctor can be of no use here!" *Here—where?* Paul rushed out into the corridor; a moment took him to Lucy's room.

Mrs. Norton started at sight of him, and instinctively stretched her arm across the door as if to keep him back. His brother, pale and horror-stricken, stood by Lucy's bed.

"What is it?" cried Paul hoarsely.

Mrs. Norton could only answer by a sob. He broke past her like a madman; he rushed to Lucy's side, looked down on her as she lay, white, and cold and rigid—the marble stillness, the livid hues, of Death upon her face. One glance was enough; it was too true that no doctor on earth could be of any use here; life had been extinct for hours.

A small phial, empty, unlabelled, was found under the pillow; on the table writing materials were scattered about as if lately used, and amongst them lay a letter, the direction uppermost so as to catch the eye. It was addressed to Paul Norton, and there, standing by his dead love's side, he read her last words.

"I told you that you should know all about me to-morrow. So you *will*—no doubt of that. The sleuth-hounds will tell you all when they find that I have escaped them. I am hunted down at last. There's only one refuge left for me, and they will not follow me *there*. Somehow I feel now as if I had always known this hour would come; I have kept something ready for it, as you will find to-morrow. I heard Dashwood's voice, and when he sees my face he will tell you who I am. And *he* will guess, what you have not suspected, that it was I who shot the man you saw as Beresford. He insulted me, threatened me; I had my little American pistol with me, and I shot him. Oh, Paul, have some mercy on my memory! Don't, don't think me all bad! You

wouldn't, if you could only know the martyrdom in which I have expiated my past—the hopes I had of a better life! And this last deed is no crime. I have rid the world of one not fit to live. He had no mercy on me, and I showed him none. He was the curse of my life from first to last. I owe him worse than death for the wreck and ruin he made of me!

“Believe the worst they tell you of me—all, except one thing. Of the worst crime laid to my charge, I am innocent. Of the murder in which I was accused of complicity four years ago, I am as innocent as little Amy. But who would believe it of a woman who has led *my* life? I was acquitted—but I know how few really thought me innocent! I say again, believe all of me except *that*! You have seen the children with me. Don't you think *their* little white souls would have felt it, if *that* had been true? My hands were clean—clean of bloodguiltiness—until last night!

“And all to-day I couldn't bear the children to be near me—it seemed so strange they didn't shrink away. And yet, you saw, they clung to me, all unconscious! And now I shall never see their little faces again. I might have brazened this out, as I have braved crises nearly as bad, but since I've known *you*, I have been changed. I have felt as I used to feel when I was a girl, ignorant and innocent; for there was a time when I was not all unworthy. And I might have been a good woman if I had known *you* earlier—if I had ever had a love like yours to lean upon! As it is, you have had a lucky escape from me. For—now I say it dying, who never owned it to you living—I loved you, Paul!—loved you as well as a better woman might have loved. Now, good-bye. Do try to forgive me!—and if you *can't* forgive, then try to forget me! I never would have wronged *you*, but you are well rid of me. Think of me sometimes, but never think of me as Lydia Walbrook! I left that hated name—that accursed life—behind when I came here. Think of me, Paul, only as the heartbroken woman who loved you better than the life she is glad, *glad* to leave. Never—never more Lydia!—only your lost and most miserable

“LUCY.”

Years passed away. At Hazelmead, Paul Norton's painting-room was shut up; the dust gathered on deserted easel and old portfolios, and on the one picture which remained there—one picture turned with its face to the wall.

Home had been sweet to him once, but now it was home no more. Whenever he was there the bitter waters of memory went over him; he could not bear the associations that filled the place; every corner was haunted by the image of the woman whom he had deemed so good and pure, who was a sin-stained waif and stray; notorious—(for it was but a few years since the name of Lydia Walbrook had been on every man's lips in a yet unforgotten

cause célèbre)—the accomplice of criminals—and at the last a criminal herself. He never spoke of the blow that had crushed his heart, but the mainspring of life was broken in him. All his associates found him a changed man; his few intimates said among themselves that Norton had undergone some terrible experience and would never be the same again. He strove to absorb himself in work, to devote himself to his art; but his nature was too emotional, too deep—perhaps too narrow and too little imaginative—for Art and Ambition to fill the vacant place of Love. Success was as Dead Sea fruit to him; and against failure, when failure came, he had no talisman of sweet home-love and faith to comfort him. He had sent all his hopes, his faith, his very heart of life, to sea, in the one frail vessel that had gone down with all on board.

And so years rolled away; and at last illness struck him down; his failing hand had to lay the brush aside; and then, weak and lonely, he thought of the old home and of his early days; then the tender memories of old overflowed the bitterness of the later past; and then he went back to Hazelmead, as they besought him to return and he cared for amongst his own people—went back, as they all saw, too soon, never to leave it more. It was his fancy to have his old “den” arranged as his sleeping-room. As he gave instructions for the moving of the furniture, his eye dwelt on the picture leaning with its face to the wall, just as he had turned it years ago when he went away.

“Leave it,” he said; “don’t touch it—let it be as it has been!” “So in that room, possessed by memories,” he lay and waited for Death; and through the long nights and weary days, who shall say what ghosts haunted him? Were they *all* dark shadows of the tragedy and horror of the past?—or did softer visions mingle with them, of the tender dreams and golden hopes that once were *here* and *his*?—did he recall those sweet hours that he had passed here before the black and bitter seas went over his soul?

Often he lay and looked at the corner wherein the unframed canvas stood leaning against the wall, the dust gathering thick on the face that was turned away—hidden—yet not as the face, whose silent image it was, was hidden in the grave-mould, beneath the coffin-lid.

And one day, when all knew the end must be very near, he pointed to the picture—said:

“Turn it—lift it—set it where I can see her!”

And his sister, weeping, turned it, and brushed away the veiling dust, and he saw again the sweet pale face, framed in its golden hair, the lips of soft and subtle curve, the dreamy eyes that told no tale of tragedy—for his hand had not portrayed, because his eye had not recognized, the black shadow of her life.

.. And, gazing at the portrait, his lips were unsealed; and he

talked of her he had not spoken of for years—spoke not of her sins nor of his sufferings, but recalling little incidents, foolish trivial memories, of their happy days.

That night they watched by him, knowing his very hours were numbered. He had sunk into an unconsciousness that was rather stupor than sleep. At dawn he stirred, opened his eyes, and bade them draw up the blinds and let in the light. The chilly light of early morning fell on the portrait.

He raised himself, supported in his brother's strong arms; and with a strange wild fixity—with that unearthly penetration of dying eyes—his gaze grew to the picture his hand had painted. He spoke—in a voice to which the old ring of strength seemed suddenly and magically restored:

"Where am I going?—and where is *she*? Lost—lost—where are the lost souls?"

"Paul—Paul," his brother replied, with solemn emotion, "it is not for *us* to say. The mercy of God is infinite!"

The dews of death were on Paul Norton's brow; his voice grew hoarse and hollow as he questioned with a terrible earnestness:

"*Is she*—my poor love—lost? No, no—it cannot be! Somewhere—somewhere—we shall meet. She said—to-morrow." Then suddenly his eyes lit up with a flash of wild and rapturous recognition as he exclaimed: "Not lost!—not lost! Ah, see! *she smiles*! Yes—to-morrow, Lucy—to-morrow." That look of strange unearthly rapture was on his face as he died; and, was it only his delusion, or—did Lucy smile indeed?

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy!" And either the watchers dreamed it or they too saw a light, that was not that of the cold grey dawn, upon the pictured face! They too saw the glory of an angelic smile play over the lips—a supernatural radiance in the eyes that for a moment seemed to beam with life. And they prayed that it might be a token that the lost and sin-stained soul had indeed won her way through remorse and penitence,

"To pardon and to peace!"

"FOR LOVE OF HIM."

By A. N. HOMER.

A STORY IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE PATIO.

THE Spanish sun has sunk, amid a gorgeous flood of mingled carmine, fleecy gold, and delicately tinted aquamarine clouds, blending with the deepest hues of *lapis lazuli*, vying with, if not rivalling in splendour, the glorious sunsets of the Bay of Bengal. It has set, and already the sicklier rays of a partially obscured full moon are shining on that rich land of the orange, fandango and guitar. Yes, it is night, night in Seville. Within one of the gaily painted two-storied houses, lounging in the patio, or inside court, are two men. The one broad-shouldered, fair-haired, and possessing frank grey eyes, is, without doubt, an Englishman. The other it is equally certain is a Spaniard, for it is alike impossible to mistake the swarthy cheek, black beard, and hawk-like expression of face which pervades the countenance of this descendant of the conquerors of the vanquished Moors.

"Gonzala, I want to talk to you," says the Englishman, lazily turning for greater ease and comfort on the cane lounge on which he is reclining at full length.

"You will speak, Senor Beauville. I am entirely at your service," replies the other, who rejoices in the high-sounding title of Don, with a score of lengthy names attached.

The only surviving son of an ancient but poor Spanish family, Don Pedro Gonzala had been left when a youth of seventeen, entirely to the care of his mother, his father having died suddenly. As is often the case his will had proved the strongest; he went where he liked, did what he pleased, and chose his own companions. The consequence was, that before he was twenty, he had well-nigh broken his mother's heart. There was nothing too brutal, vengeful or daring for him to attempt. If he wanted money he would rob. To get rid of one he disliked or against whom he bore a grudge, he would use his knife. Men of

his own stamp admired and gathered about him, and soon he had become the leader of a band of the most lawless cut-throats in the south of Spain, and the authorities if they did not connive, at all events, winked at his misdeeds.

Changing his position but slightly, as he leans against one of the ornamental pillars for support, he awaits the other's reply.

"There you go again. *Senor*. Egad! we have known each other long enough. Why do you not call me John—plain John Beauville? Then we shall understand each other."

"When do you return to England?" asks Gonzala coolly, apparently not heeding, probably not choosing to pay any attention to the friendly words just uttered by Beauville.

"Have not thought of it yet. No, no. Faith, I am deucedly comfortable where I am. Why, are you tired of my cheerful society?"

"Far from it, *senor*."

"Hand me those matches, Gonzala, like a good fellow," replies Beauville, pointing to a box which has fallen to the ground. "There, now, I am happy once more," he continued, as he re-lights a long-stemmed meerschaum. "You asked me when I intend to return to England. Now, suppose in reply, I were to tell you that my return is postponed indefinitely, what would you think?"

"I should be at a loss to understand the reason. All your plans have undergone such a sudden and unlooked-for change."

"The reasons for my continuing here, Gonzala, are summed up in a few words. I have been happy."

A dark shadow passes over the face of the Spaniard, as the pale-rays of the moon light up his striking features, so perfect in outline, but his keen piercing eyes flash dangerously, as he deftly rolls a paper cigarette with his long slender fingers.

"Ah! *senor*, you like our beautiful Seville, and no wonder. Who that has once looked upon its balmy orange groves can fail to wish to linger here. And then the climate of your country is so bad, so gloomy, depressing and cold. I know it well. I was in London for some time. If you get a fine day by chance, the effects and charming sensation are soon and suddenly washed from your mind. You wake up to find the streets which but a few hours before were bright and sunny a horrible chaos of mud and fog."

"Ah! well, with all her faults, I like the old country."

"I cannot sympathize with you, *senor*, but in that case why delay your return?"

"Gonzala, if I did not know you better, I should begin to think that you were anxious to see the last of me."

"Impossible, *senor*."

"Well, you do not think for one moment that it is the beauties of Seville alone which keep me chained to this place? I gave you credit for keener perceptive powers."

"My own society, perhaps, *senor*?" replies the Spaniard with a light laugh.

"No, not even that, if you will pardon me. We get on splendidly together, although we are opposed to each other on political questions. No, my reasons are more weighty." As he says these words, John Beauville removes the cherrywood pipe stem from his lips with a pleasant laugh, and watches ring after ring of pale-blue smoke wind its upward way until lost in the darkness.

"And those reasons are?"—Gonzala pauses in his sentence with well-feigned listlessness, as though he had lost all interest in the answer.

"Ah! that is another matter," laughs Beauville.

"You will tell me?"

"It would be a long story, at least if I told you in my roundabout fashion; and it may be that the words are as well left unsaid."

Alas! how utterly beyond the power of man it is to foresee events or to recognize the deadly peril that our own heedless words may place us in. Had John Beauville never told his tale—never confided trustingly, foolishly, blindly, to a seeming friend—never believed that to some extent he could rely on the man at his side, there would be no necessity to write these lines.

"You know nothing of my life, *Gonzala*?"

"Nothing more than I have gleaned by casual remarks, *senor*."

"Would you care to hear?"

"Yes."

"Can I trust you?"

"Not one word that you tell me shall pass my lips."

"Then listen, and I promise you to cut it as short as possible. In England, and in the county of Cornwall, within a few hundred yards of the sea, stands the old house where first I saw the light, named after the neighbouring village, Pentrouel Court. The place was given to one of my ancestors for gallant deeds in battle. And well might we all be proud of it. No patios or balconies, *Gonzala*, but a thorough specimen of an English country house. Walls thick enough to resist the cold and damp, and ivy covering the whole, and even twining up the thin tall chimneys. My younger brother Rupert and I loved nothing better than to wander, hand in hand together, in search of the eggs of the sea birds which swarmed in the holes and crannies of the black rugged cliffs, or to swim out through the foaming breakers for mere sport and pastime. Ah! those were happy days, and I would that they could all come over again; but it cannot be. I was the eldest son, as I told you, and I fear a spoilt one; but if there was one being I loved best on earth, it was my mother. At the age of sixteen I was a strong and hardy lad, passionately fond of either rowing or sailing a boat. It so happened that the punt which my brother and I had been in the habit of using was nearly

done for. All the knowledge I possessed of managing a sailing craft I had picked up from the fishermen, with whom I was a great favourite, but I considered it enough to warrant me in asking my father to consent to my having a sailing boat of my own. It ended in my getting my own way, as usual, and I became the possessor of a small half-decked cutter-rigged boat. Many a jolly excursion Rupert and I had together; and what with shooting and fishing we contrived to make the days go pleasantly enough. I was looked upon as a fearless young jackanapes by all the old salts, who would shake their heads and predict a watery grave for me. I have often wished since that it could have been so—that I alone might have been the only sufferer for my hardihood and folly. It is all impressed upon my memory as plainly as if it had only occurred but yesterday, and yet long years have passed. My father had been unexpectedly summoned to London by a letter from his solicitor, and left my mother, Rupert and myself under the impression that he would most likely be detained there, on matters connected with the estate, for some days. The first two of these passed much in the same way as usual, but late in the afternoon of the third I persuaded my mother to intrust herself to my care. Much against her will, for she disliked the water and was but an indifferent sailor, she consented. Rupert, for some reason, did not care to come, and so we were alone. It was a glorious evening towards the end of August; the calm, placid sea reflected on its smooth surface the deep blue of the sky, and there was only just enough wind, which was off shore, to fill the sails. We must have been no more than a mile and a half from the beach, and I was in the act of pointing out to my mother a gable end of Pentrouel Court, which was just discernible amongst the trees, when a tremendous gust of wind struck us. I let go the sheet and halyards in an instant, but it was useless. The next moment I was in the water and exerting all my strength to support my mother. This I did for some time—I could never tell how long; those minutes seemed to me like a life of horror, in which I saw my own past years arrayed in hideous clearness before my mind. The next thing I remember was slowly recovering consciousness in the arms of one of the fishermen who had witnessed the accident and strained every muscle to come to our assistance, but too late—too late to save my mother. When I heard that I, her son, had been the cause, though unwittingly, of her death, I became dangerously ill, and delirium set in, from which I only recovered to meet the stony grief and anguish of my father. From that day, outwardly he ceased to recognize me as his son. I was sent away to a tutor in London, and never saw his face in life again. A few short months, and he too was lying in the quiet Cornish churchyard by the side of my mother, whom he loved so passionately. Since then, and from that moment I became actually

my own master, my life has been a strange one. I could not bear the old house, the familiar objects; even my brother Rupert's face recalled too vividly the awful tragedy of which I had been, God knows, the innocent cause. So I have wandered abroad from one land to another, from town to town; but go where I would I have ever been haunted by that pitiless phantom, remorse. At times I have thought that I should go mad, but calmer moments came. Then that my life were better ended than lived on hopelessly, but my own hand fell powerless to my side, and God in His mercy kept me from that fearful crime. Then I came here, and, Gonzala, I think at last that I have found an antidote to all my misery. Why should I mourn the past? Can I alter it? No; I am powerless. I shall live, and honestly return the love of her for whom I would give my life—Dona Isidore Carmiera."

"You love her?"

"With all my heart."

"And she?"

"Returns my love."

The words have scarcely left Beauville's lips, before the hand of the Spaniard is on his throat, his knee pressed firmly upon his chest.

"Madre de Dios! You lie! Swear by the God whom you worship, by the Saviour by whose death you hope for life—swear to relinquish her, or I shall shoot you like the dog you are."

Beauville is powerless to move; Gonzala's fingers grip his throat like bands of steel, but he gurgles forth defiantly the single word: "Never!"

Swift as the lightning, Gonzala draws a revolver. There is a sharp report, followed by a deep groan from Beauville; then a solemn stillness. The Spaniard relinquishes his hold to examine his victim. The moon rolls from behind a cloud, pure, pale and beautiful, unsullied by the awful crime of which she alone is the silent witness; lingering and touching with her clear, cold rays the ghastly upturned countenance of the dead.

CHAPTER II.

FOR YOUR SAKE.

AT no great distance from the Plaza de la Encarnacion, which is, roughly speaking, the centre of Seville, a short walk up one of the many tortuous calles, or more properly speaking, lanes, brings one to the entrance of a long, low two-storied house. Before the door of this edifice, half hidden in shadow and standing motionless, as if seeking admittance, is the figure of a man attired in a loose cloak and wearing a broad-brimmed sombrero, much over his face,

evidently for the purpose of concealment. Twice he knocks, each time pausing with his head bent low, intently listening to every sound. At length a casement above is opened and a woman's shrill voice in subdued accents asks:

"Who is there?"

"Madre de Dios! it is I, Don Pedro Gonzala; can you not open to me without interviewing me at your leisure?"

"Have patience, senor, and I will come as fast as my old legs will carry me," replies the woman in a querulous voice, and yet as if mightily impressed with the importance of her visitor.

"An old pest," mutters Gonzala, for it is that worthy gentleman, "she is one more nuisance which must be got rid of."

"Precious slow, my good woman, but see that you sharpen your pace next time," he continues, as after numerous bolts are withdrawn, he stands inside the dwelling and confronts the aged janitor. "One would think that all Seville was made up of a mixed population of robbers and assassins. Did you take me for one of them?"

"No, good senor."

"Then you may know for the future that this house at least is safe, I will see to that. Dona Isidiore Carmiera, she is here?"

"Yes, senor."

"Then lead me to her." The old dame lights the way, up a short staircase and along a winding passage, until she stands before a door which she is about to open, when the soft, clear strains of a woman's voice and the sweet notes of a guitar are audible. Gonzala pauses; the stern expression of his dark, handsome faces changes; the rigid lines about his cruel mouth are chased away as if by magic. Suddenly he seems to recollect that he is not alone and turns to his conductor.

"Leave me," he mutters in a low voice, and with a wave of his hand—"leave me, I will announce myself."

Noiselessly the woman disappears. As if spell-bound Gonzala listens to verse after verse of the song; at length a few wild chords are struck and the exquisite soprano voice dies away. Gonzala gently opens the door and stands inside a long low-ceiled room. Apparently his intrusion has not been noticed, for the lady, whose back is turned to him, does not move her head or alter her position in the least.

It may be as well to state at once who and what Dona Carmiera is. The only child of, alas, for her, a most unfortunate and ill-starred marriage—her father a direct descendant of a long line of Spanish hidalgos, her mother equally well connected—Dona Isidiore Carmiera in her early youth had known no troubles save family ones, which are perhaps the worst. Strife and dissension between her parents she had witnessed during her infancy. This had deepened into open rupture, and at length a mutual separation was agreed upon. Dona Isidiore, not knowing who was right or

who wrong, had clung to her father. Soon he died, leaving all his vast fortune to his daughter, save a small life annuity to his wife. At this will her mother was furious, would hear of no compromise, and refused to see her face again. Dona Isidiore, taught to believe ill of her, had been content to live alone, attended by one old and faithful servant of her father's.

On the floor in rich profusion are skins of various kinds. The sofa on which she is half reclining is covered with the fur of a magnificent leopard; lovely hot-house plants in china vases of rare and costly workmanship are scattered profusely about her, arranged with all a woman's taste. Tapestry of an age and quality which would have made the eyes of a London *bric-à-brac* dealer water with envy, adorns the walls, and paintings of various subjects are not wanting to add their testimony of wealth and comfort. On a curiously inlaid table by her side stands a tall, elegantly-formed silver lamp, which sheds its subdued rays directly upon the face of the solitary occupant of the chamber. Her head is bent down over her instrument, which is attached to her shoulder by a broad silken band. Suddenly her ear appears to catch some slight noise, for she glances quickly about her; one look at her face is enough to tell one that she is a true type of the Sevillana, the purest specimen of Andalusian beauty. Her large blue-black eyes are soft and melting, her forehead low and rather inclined to be small; the silky masses of her raven hair have escaped from confinement and float loosely about her. A tiny foot resting on a low fauteuil is just visible beneath her satin skirt. Another instant and she has started up.

"I am sure I heard a sound," she murmurs, moving towards the opposite end of the room, which is but dimly lighted by the single oil-lamp, and the corner of which is occupied by a screen of stamped Cordova leather.

"So you did, lady. It is I, Pedro Gonzala. I must offer you a thousand apologies for my unannounced intrusion, but I sent your good servant away, and dared to venture in alone."

"And you were, doubtless, a listener to my poor musical efforts," replies Dona Carmiera, with a charming smile as she sinks with languid grace on the sofa.

"If all the ladies of Seville sang but half as sweetly, the air would be full of exquisite music. I heard you from the passage, where I stayed, fearful of dispelling by my untimely entrance the sweetest sounds it has ever been my lot to hear."

"You flatter me, Don Pedro, but you know you are ever welcome."

"I have been, but I fear I may be so no longer."

"What do you mean? Your words are full of riddles to me, and I am the worst person in the world to solve them."

"Dona Carmiera, I come here red-handed. I am the murderer of the Englishman, Señor Beauville."

"You a murderer," she ejaculates, starting from him, her face blanched white as marble.

"Hush! the walls have ears, and there is no knowing that your servant may not already have taken up a position at the nearest key-hole," replies Gonzala sarcastically.

The liquid blue-black depths of Dona Carmiera's eyes flash scornfully as she answers:

"You have nothing to fear from her or me. But to cut this ghastly tale short——"

"I shot him, for love of you. Shot him as I would a rat, because he swore that you loved him, and that he would rather die than give you up. Did you love him? Quick, give me my answer, and I will leave you for ever—the curse of Cain hanging over me, my life unsafe, the hounds of justice at my heels, offended heaven dooming me to death. *For your sake.*"

The form of Dona Carmiera is stretched nearly full length on the leopard skin, her delicately rounded white arm supports her head. The masses of her raven hair half hide her face, but her beautiful profile, shown clearly by the light behind her, is a study worthy of the intricately minute brush of Raphael. Her bosom rises and falls beneath its covering of satin; her little foot, with its high-arched instep, jerks nervously, and the jewels on her fingers flash as they tremble with emotion.

"You loved him. Then I may go. Speak to me, for the sake of heaven," says Gonzala, moving as if to leave her.

Her face is averted, but a gesture of her hand does not escape the Spaniard. He is on his knees by her side in a moment.

"Dona Carmiera, from the first day I saw you, ever since we played together as children, and I began to understand what love is, I have worshipped you. Could I stand by unmoved whilst the words of this upstart Englishman blasted my hopes for ever? Say, at least, that you forgive me, and—dare I hope it, dare I dream of such happiness for an instant?—return the love I fling at your feet. Tell me, shall I go, or do you love me? Say but one word, and the evil that I have braved for your sake will be a hundred times repaid."

The warm, rich blood mantles to the full round cheeks, an expression of tenderness suffuses her whole features; the love-light sparkles in her dark orbs. Dona Isidiore Carmiera is conquered. With an air of perfect trust and abandon her lovely head sinks on Gonzala's shoulder. His arms are round her. The air is heavy with the sweet perfume of flowers. He is madly, wildly intoxicated with his new-born joy. She loves him; it is enough. Again and again his lips are pressed to hers in passionate embrace.

"Let me hear you say you love me," he whispers. Dona Isidiore lifts her head frankly:

"I do," she murmurs, and again he strains her to his breast.

"But is it not dangerous," at length she says, disengaging

herself, "for you to remain here? You will be arrested, and then oh! may the Blessed Virgin preserve you."

"There is no danger at present. My mother was the sole occupant of the house at the time, and I do not think that she is likely to denounce me. The neighbours, of course, would be alarmed by the sound of the shot, but I left before any of them had had time to inquire into the cause of it. The pistol that I used I placed in a natural position, and at a convenient distance from the dead man's hand. And quietly walking up to the first alguazil I met, with him I went before the worthy old alcalde. I am safe in his hands; he has me in wholesome dread, for I have but to give some of my followers the order and they would rob him as soon as they would a hen-roost. There is not another lady in Seville in whom I dare confide, sweet one, but you I can trust. No, what I fear is that as soon as the report of his death reaches the ears of his relatives in England, and he has connections, many and powerful, I know, for the rich make many friends—as soon as they hear, then will be the hue and cry, and then, Isidiore, I shall want your love to support me, and your ready woman's wit to aid me in all my dangers."

"And you shall have it," replies the girl, placing her warm plump hand in his; "was it not for me that you perilled your life?"

"Now that I have told you all, and you are true—true as I could have staked my life you would be—the worst seems over. Have I not your love? And now I must be gone, for I have matters weighty and of grave importance to attend to. But fear not; I shall soon return to press you to my heart. So, sweet one, I'll away. Good-night, good-night; and may the Blessed Virgin guard your sleep, as I would, were I with you." Another passionate lover's kiss is pressed upon Dona Isidiore's rosy lips—the sound of Gonzala's footsteps become fainter and fainter, until at length they die away in the distance, and the girl is once more alone.

CHAPTER III.

PENTROUEL.

It is a clear bright evening in autumn, the last few hours of a day such as is not uncommon on the Cornish coast towards the approach of winter, when all nature seems, like a drowning man, to put forth its efforts, as if unwilling to relinquish the cheerful warmth of summer, and to plunge so soon again into the damp, cold and leafless gloom of winter. The sun is just kissing with its golden edge the placid sea, tinting it with the most gorgeous colours that the mind of man can conceive, and far more beautifully delicate tones than his brush is able to portray. The high

frowning cliffs stand out in bold deep shadows, their summits clothed in golden light, and down below on the shingly beach the waves are murmuring their gentle, ceaseless lullaby. All nature is wrapt in peace, and no noise breaks the stillness, save the shrill cry of a sea gull or the chirp of a linnet as it calls to its mate from the topmost twig of a patch of gorse. A solitary figure is standing on the highest point of cliff which towers above Pentronel, clearly defined against the pale gold of the sky. It is that of a tall well-grown girl. Her hand is raised to protect her eyes from the dazzling rays of the sunset as she watches the distant white-sailed ships and the tracks of foam made by the lug-rigged craft, as one by one they follow each other out of the little harbour in quest of pilchards. "Well, it is a glorious view, and one that I never tire of looking at," murmurs the girl gently to herself. "I prefer Cornwall to any other county; and how stupid it was of John Beauville to go abroad and leave a home like this. Perhaps I shouldn't have liked him—or, what is still more probable, he would not have cared for me—so it's all for the best."

To look at her as she stands encased in a blue cloth tight-fitting walking dress, her golden hair braided in a large oval coil at the back of her head, on which is placed the neatest of straw hats, and from under the brim of which an aristocratic little nose is visible, it is certainly extremely difficult to imagine any one so utterly cold and callous to womanly beauty as to be indifferent to the grace and well-bred refinement of Clarice Polwurth, for such is the name she dashes down, in a large bold hand, when she does deign to write, but that is as seldom as possible, for she tells every one that it is her pet abhorrence.

"What an age Rupert is," she continues, without turning to notice a man who with long strides has approached to within hearing distance.

"Is he, little one? Well, here he is at last to express his solicitude for having kept you waiting so long."

"How you startled me," she answers, turning to him with a bright smile. "You have come; so I suppose I must forgive you for keeping me waiting so long. It is better late than never, you know, and you are just in time to see the last vestige of the sun before he deserts us altogether."

Clarice Polwurth was an only child. Her father was colonel of a crack light cavalry regiment which had been ordered to India, and thither he had taken his young wife, leaving his daughter to the care of relatives. Mrs. Polwurth was of a delicate constitution, and soon after Clarice had reached her ninth year she died of consumption. When seventeen years of age, Clarice had joined her father in Delhi, and but a few months had elapsed before his regiment was sent to Afghanistan on active service. Meanwhile Clarice, who was surrounded by friends, longingly looked forward to the day when her father should return. But she was doomed

to sad and bitter disappointment. Colonel Polwirth was fated to meet his death on Afghan soil. In the first skirmish that occurred he was shot through the heart and was buried, like so many of our gallant fellows, in sight of the very position he had given his blood to defend. Amongst his papers was found a letter addressed to his old friend, John Beauville of Pentrouel, in which he commended his daughter Clarice to his care in the event of his own demise. This letter was inclosed in one written by Clarice herself, and directed to John Beauville, but it only reached Pentrouel a few days before the death of the man to whom it was addressed. From it he learnt that Clarice Polwirth, accompanied by her faithful companion, an ancient but good-hearted spinster, Miss Cubley by name, and attended by her maid, was already on her way to England. John Beauville must have known full well that he should never welcome to his hospitable home the child of his dead friend, for he called Rupert to his bedside and there made him solemnly promise to protect the orphan girl so long as he should live. A few weeks afterwards, Clarice Polwirth arrived in London, and journeyed to Pentrouel, only to find that the man whom she had pictured to herself as a kind, good-natured guardian, was sleeping peacefully in the old family vault, under the yews in the village churchyard. This short digression was an essential one, as it briefly, but distinctly, explains the position of the orphan girl in the Pentrouel household.

"How treacherously beautiful the water looks to-night," says Rupert, as he stoops to caress a pet liver and white spaniel.

"Down, Shot, down," he adds, as the dog springs up and fawns about him.

"Beautiful indeed, and treacherous too, but a row on such a lovely evening *would* be delightful," replies Clarice. "Come, Rupert, can I not prevail upon you to take me?"

"Do not ask me. You know my reasons for refusing. I hate the water and everything in connection with it; it seems to me to have been a sort of curse to our family."

"Oh! no, not that, only a terrible misfortune, and it was thoughtless of me to allude to it; forgive me."

"Nonsense, Clarice; how can I possibly have anything to forgive; besides you only indirectly brought to my mind a subject of which of late, I must confess it has been full, and had you said nothing I should have spoken to you."

"And it was ——?" asks Clarice, pausing and looking up into his face with a pleased expression, glad that her request, by raking up the past, had not offended him.

"About my brother John. I have not heard from him for a long time, and if I were superstitious I should be inclined to think that all is not well with him."

"But you do not believe in dreams or ghosts, do you?"

"I think that there is more in the former than in the latter,

but I do not attach much credence to either; though Cornish people, as a rule, thoroughly believe in brownies and other kinds of hobgoblins."

"Dear me, I am beginning to feel quite nervous," says Clarice, with a well-assumed little shudder.

"Well, it is time we returned to Pentrouel, even Shot is beginning to get tired and sleepy."

"Are *you*?" asks Clarice, with a mischievous twinkle in her deep violet eyes.

"Not in the least," replies Rupert, on whom the look is lost. He had always been blind to a fact apparent to even a casual observer—namely, that Clarice Polwurth was by no means indifferent to him. The close companionship in which they had lived had failed to stir up in his heart thoughts of love, for Rupert Beauville had always considered her very much in the light of a young girl, a sort of niece over whom he had especial charge, and for whose welfare he was mainly responsible, owing to the solemn promise he had given his father.

"Take me down to the beach then, and let us return home that way," says Clarice.

"My dear girl, it is much longer, and the air is getting chilly."

Clarice says nothing in answer to this, for though she does not care to show it, she feels considerably piqued by his answer.

"Through the lanes and past the witches' cauldron is the nearest cut. I don't want you to catch cold, you know; that is my motive for hurrying you home in this way. Take my arm," continues Rupert, extending it. The last part of his sentence had pleased Clarice mightily; it showed solicitude for her and set matters right. So she surrenders her daintily-gloved little hand to his keeping and together they descend the hill, scaring the rabbits who have come out of their burrows for their evening nibble. Shot gets wildly excited, and dashes right and left in pursuit of the white tails which dart about in the thickening twilight.

"Do you know, Clarice, I dreamt that John was dead," says Rupert, abruptly breaking the silence.

"Did you? How horrid, but you do not believe in dreams and neither do I."

"No; but I have felt strangely despondent lately, and I cannot dismiss the thoughts from my mind."

"Think no more about it then, and to-morrow will bring you a letter."

"I hope you will prove a true prophet, little one."

They have entered a narrow lane over which the boughs of the hazel-nut nearly interlace, and the steep banks on either hand are full of wondrous specimens of the hartstongue, oak and other ferns; tall fox-gloves, pink and white, bend their stiff but stately heads, and the brown-backed, gloomy hills rear their sombre sides

on either hand. Soon they begin to ascend, until they are nearly on a level with the summit of the cliffs. A few minutes more, and they have reached a small wicket-gate, which Rupert opens with the aid of a key, and which is a private means of admittance to the grounds of Pentrouel Court. The outline of the house, or what must have been at one time the Castle, can be seen looming blackly through the stems of a miniature wood of fir trees. On one side of the edifice an angle of the path brings the two young people into a broad carriage drive, leading on the one hand to the house, and in the other direction to what is known as the East Lodge, for the Court can boast of two. The oldest portion of the building, plainly distinguishable by its time-worn hue, is a square massive tower, built after the style of the Norman period, but so many additions and alterations have been made from time to time by the succeeding generations of the Beauville family, that whatever symmetry it may have once possessed has been entirely destroyed, and the general outline is a confused mass, forming the most singular medley of corners and crannies, gables and turrets. Some of the upper windows, where the clambering ivy allows them to be seen, are filled with diamond-shaped panes of glass. A solid oaken door admits one into a huge square hall, hung round with antlers and other trophies of the chase; suits of ancient armour and weapons of warfare decorate the walls, together with endless hunting crops and fishing rods of more modern times. An enormous open fire-place with ingle nooks occupies one end, and massive iron fire-dogs, to which the fire-irons are attached by a strong chain, stand on either side. In front of the blazing wood logs, for it is a particular hobby of Rupert Beauville to insist upon fires being kept burning even in summer, is stretched a rough, shaggy specimen of the true breed of Scottish deerhound, long of limb and of powerful build. The dog is made a great pet of by Clarice, and as she pats him he acknowledges her caress by a low whine of affection and approval. Miss Cubley, a thin shrunken-looking spinster, with sharp, straight, kindly features, makes her appearance and greets Clarice with a perfect storm of questions and advice.

"Has she not been out too long? The ground is damp, and she is sure her feet *must* be wet." She will not yield an inch on this point, and Clarice, giving way in sheer desperation, is carried off by the good woman to the upper regions. Rupert strolls upstairs and makes his way, by means of a spiral staircase, on to the top of the tower, from the battlements of which a splendid view of the surrounding country is to be had. He has come up evidently with the intention of enjoying his evening smoke, for he lights a cigar, and then, with his eyes fixed on vacancy and his body half supported by the stone parapet, he sinks into a deep reverie.

* * * *

Several days pass much in the usual way, varied by nothing more than the ordinary round of amusements afforded by a quiet country life. But one morning, Rupert, who is generally first in the breakfast room, is shaken out of his normal state of quietude by seeing a large official envelope addressed to himself. A glance at the postmark is enough to tell him that it is from Spain. At first he has not the courage to open it.

"What can it mean?" he mutters in a hollow voice, as the remembrance of his dream enters his mind. He recollects it so vividly now, and as he still holds the letter in his hand and scans the unknown characters, with his face blanched and a sickening feeling creeping into his heart, inwardly he *feels* that if he never breaks the seal, never seeks to know what it contains, none the less surely would his very soul cry out that his brother lives no more. With trembling fingers he tears open the outer covering and draws forth a lengthy document, which acquaints him with the fact that a man, believed to be his brother, was found dead in a house in Seville; that the police have investigated the matter thoroughly, and that all the evidence obtainable points to the fact that the Senor Beauville was the cause of his own death. He reads no further.

"My brother commit suicide—take his own life! God in heaven, it cannot be! The scoundrels, they have murdered him," he exclaims, as he throws the hated paper from him, only to pick it up and turn it over, noticing what he had failed to observe before, that at the end it bears the signature of the Chief of the Spanish Police in Seville. He hears nothing—sees nothing, a mist comes before his eyes, his very brain reels, and he sinks into a chair. Clarice Polwurth enters the room, her rounded cheeks just faintly tinged with a colour rivalling the delicate bloom on a peach, the masses of her golden hair resting on the crown of her head, gracing it more richly than a coronet could have done; her dress of simple white relieved only by a rose she has just gathered. She is about to bid him good-morning in her old laughing way, but, woman-like, she sees it all in an instant: the pained look on his face, the distressed expression of the eyes, which she hardly dare think and yet inwardly feels she loves so well. She pauses, and then gently, with her soft eyes dimmed with the sorrow she does not understand but still shares with him, she approaches him and lays her firm, cool hand upon his arm.

"Rupert, what is it?"

"Read that," he answers, "and tell me now whether dreams mean nothing. Read it, and hear me swear before God and you, *never to rest, never to let my mind know peace*, until, living or dead, I have discovered his murderer, and wiped this foul blot from our name."

"Calm yourself, Rupert," says Clarice in a firm but low voice.

"Do not talk to me of being calm. The very heavens cry out

against my brother's murderer! And yet it is coolness that I want and iron nerve to bear me to the end, and help me bridle my passion; and yet my very blood boils. But one path lies before me, it is a broad and plain one, and come what may I shall follow it to the end. My resolution is formed, I must leave for Seville with as little delay as possible. You will find it dull, Clarice, staying here during my absence; would it not be better for you to accept the Welbys' invitation and run up to town for a few weeks?"

"Thanks, Rupert; it is kind of you to think of me at such a time, but I have already written a refusal and shall be far happier here. But you have taken no breakfast."

"I cannot eat; all appetite has left me. I must be alone. Try and cheer up; I shall soon be back." With these few words, spoken in a kindly tone, although his voice is half-choked by emotion, Rupert Beauville quits the breakfast room, and with a firm step seeks the solitude of his own thoughts to combat alone the anguish he feels at the loss of the only relative he had on earth. It is ever so. Alone we must bear our griefs and trials; no mortal hand can guide us or help to smooth our path. The ones who love us are powerless. Their outstretched hand can never help. In solemn loneliness we each must journey through the dark valley, and enter the silent land beyond.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COMPACT.

IN no mood for the ceaseless bustle and noisy activity which it is impossible to evade in a hotel, Rupert Beauville soon succeeded in finding a house rather on the outskirts of Seville, part of which he has engaged for his own use during his stay. It is within an easy walk of the house where John Beauville was so foully murdered by Gonzala. Rupert has already visited the spot, and twice has had long conversations with the stupid old alcalde, and has spent several sovereigns in gratuitous tips to the various functionaries, but all to no purpose; he can gather no information calculated to enable him to point to the guilty man. Secretly he has offered the police a large reward if they can make the discovery which he has travelled so far to prosecute. Still, Rupert Beauville is possessed of no ordinary will. He is just as confident of his ultimate success as when he set out from Pen-trouel Court. In the first place, he has confidence in his brother. They had grown up with each other; he had had every opportunity of studying his character. Secondly, he has an idea, a sort of blind belief, that it is utterly impossible for John Beauville ever to have been guilty of such an atrocious crime. He will not

permit doubts of any kind to occupy a place in his mind for one moment, and unhesitatingly believes in his dead brother. So day after day he strolls about the crowded, busy streets of the ancient and beloved capital of the Moslem, and gazes at the brilliant shops, and visits the Giralda so exquisitely ornamented after the Moorish style, wondering at the beauty of the vast expanse of country, with the Guadalquivir, like a silver ribbon, winding its way amidst lovely sunlit plains and groves of oranges: all of which he feasts his eyes upon from the summit of the town, almost forgetting at times the terrible nature of his errand in his admiration of this, perhaps the most romantic of all Spain's luxuriously beautiful cities.

Dona Isidiore Carmiera is seated at the window, which opens on to a balcony, in the identical room where we left her after her interview with Don Pedro Gonzala, but as she pensively looks out upon the broad stretch of country dotted with its dazzlingly white houses, set in their rich frames of emerald green palms, a tear slowly courses down her cheek. What can this mean? Her lustrous eyes are dimmed and dark circles underline them; her cheek shows evident traces of care. Can it be that her compact of love has been fraught with unhappiness, or that some sudden and unexpected calamity has come upon her, or that her lover has proved false?

The loud tones of a man's voice make Dona Isidiore spring to her feet; her face, which was pale before, becomes ashy white. "What shall I do?" she murmurs, her tiny hands clenched tightly. "Shall I stoop to do his bidding, or shall I defy him? What of his love, bought at such a price? Am I his minion, his slave, to execute his will? Blood has been shed, and shall I lend myself to him that more may flow? A thousand times no. And yet he loves me. But can I—can I even for him—oh! may the Blessed Virgin help me," she adds, breaking off in the middle of her sentence as if the words are more than she can utter, and she flings herself back into her seat, her hands tightly clasped to her forehead, in an agony of despair.

"Let him come," she continues. As if in answer to her words, a heavy step is audible in the passage leading to the door. The next instant it is flung open and Don Pedro Gonzala enters the room. The expression of his pale, sinister face is not good to look upon. Dona Isidiore turns away with a vain attempt to hide her tears, but Gonzala is too quick for her. He takes in the situation with one rapid glance of his cruel eyes.

"So you welcome me with tears when I come to see you. What is it all about now? I want you to look your best and not cry your eyes out as you women invariably do about nothing. It was different a few weeks ago. Then you were all smiles and honeyed sayings. Then you could promise to lay down your life, to sacrifice anything and everything, for me. Idle words, mere

empty expressions, count but little and avail me nothing. Come, dry your tears, and tell me that you are willing to do all I ask. I would not try your love for me so sorely could I help it."

"You might save yourself the trouble, and me the pain of listening to all your taunts," answers Dona Carmiera.

Gonzala sees that upbraidings will have but poor effect, and will not aid him to gain the ends he desires, so cunningly he changes his tactics. A bland smile plays round the corners of his wicked mouth, and instead of a stern expression he assumes one of apparent indifference.

"Taunts! Dona Isidore Carmiera. You mistake me. If in the heat of passion at finding that you, in whom I placed my faith, would rather desert my cause—if my temper overruled my more calm judgment, forgive me. I regret that I have ever asked your succour. A man's a fool indeed who, trusting in a woman, looks to her for help. But I leave you, for I needs must seek assistance where I best can find it. Adieu, lady, we shall meet again, I trust, when I have rid myself of all the enemies I made by loving you." Gonzala turns to go; already he has grasped the handle of the door; he has played card after card with consummate skill, he has thrown down his last one boldly, and confidently pauses for the issue. He has not miscalculated in the very least.

A low sob from Dona Isidore, and the sound of his own name, in a broken, passionate voice, recalls him to her side. He is sure of his ground now, yet he does not yield an inch, but stands calmly waiting for her to break the silence first.

"Can you judge me so harshly?" she asks in a soft plaintive voice, her lovely form half grovelling before him.

"I—far be it from me to dream of judging you, Dona Isidore. I asked; you refused. I am content. What more can I say or do to please you?"

"Love me," she murmurs, her eyes melting with unspoken tenderness, as she gazes boldly into his face. "Do with me what you will, only do not desert me. I am friendless—without one soul on earth who cares whether I live or die."

"It is not so, Dona Isidore. Hear me. I love you passionately, with all my heart, but I must have love for love. What would I shrink from doing for your sake? You know it. Then give me what I ask in return—your heart."

"You have it beyond recall. Let me give you proof. Ask me all you wish. You have but to speak the words. I will perform anything unflinchingly for your sake."

"It is not much I ask, Isidore."

"Name it quickly; oh! Pedro, let me wash from your mind the stains of doubt which blacken it towards me."

"Then listen. What I want you to do must be done to-night. I have obtained secret information which I can rely upon, to the

effect that the Senor Rupert Beauville attends a ceremony in the church of the Saint Basilio. You will go there, and on leaving the building walk straight down the steps and wait. One of my men, whom I can trust, knows the Senor Beauville by sight, as does every fellow under my command. At the right moment he will rush forward as if to offer you violence. You will cry out for help; naturally enough the Senor Beauville will attempt the rescue. He shall succeed. My fellow will discreetly beat a retreat, leaving the Englishman master of the position. In this way I shall effect the most superbly romantic introduction, and—well, I shall leave the rest in your hands. If he does not fall in love with you he must be possessed of a heart hard as adamant. But he cannot resist you, pretty one. I judge him by myself; and if I mistake not, from the way in which I saw him ogling a girl from the Triana quarter, he will soon fall an easy victim to Cupid's arrow; but the little gipsy had eyes such as he had never looked upon before. You will make love to him. Deftly you will ask him questions, find out his intentions, all his plans, and how he means to seek the murderer of his brother. By dint of woman's wit, which you sweet ones so well know how to employ, know all he has to tell. Such information will be of priceless value to me. It is his gold I fear, not him. Then when we have pressed the juice from the orange we must hurl it on one side, but with the greatest caution. Should he become troublesome, I shall have him captured without any injury to his precious limbs, of course, but most silently removed to a safe retreat I have within a four hours' gallop of this town. If he leaves this place, once his investigations ended, but attended with but poor results, let him go in peace; but if not, and he sees fit to buzz, hornet-like, too near my ears, Madre de Dios! let him look to it; he may not live to tell the tale. And now, sweet one, a kiss; I wish I could but stay to take a score, but I have plans to form and much that must be done before I can return to drink my fill of love. Good-bye; remember, then, to-night in the Saint Basilio."

The door closes after him, he has gone, and Dona Isidiore, young and inexperienced, has fallen into the trap so cleverly laid for her, and has become the dupe and tool of an inhuman scoundrel.

CHAPTER V.

A CLEVER ALLY.

AGAIN the darkness of night has taken possession of the fair city of Seville, but it seems only to have added to the merriment and laughter, the din and bustle of her streets. The whole town appears to be one blaze of light. In the patios of every house are crowds of guests, assembled for the evening tertulia, an informal

species of gathering in which the Sevillians enter heart and soul, and with all the energy of their laughter-loving, pleasure-seeking nature. A round full moon has risen high in the dark blue heavens, the broad infinite space of which is decked by gorgeous myriads of stars; the lofty tower of the Giralda, the tall spires of the churches and domes are bathed in silver light, or thrown into strong black relief by Diana's fitful rays. The sounds of a guitar making low, sweet melody may be faintly heard, as some amorous, love-sick Don serenades the lady of his heart beneath her chamber window, or not unfrequently the noise and shouts of a brawl, as two men meet to find the object of their love to be identical; and then the deadly lunge of an albacete knife quickly puts an end to all disputes and differences.

Gonzala's information as to the movements of Rupert Beauville, as supplied to him by the loquacious woman who acts as landlady and sole servant to the Englishman, was perfectly authentic. Gonzala had taken care to open the strings of his purse, and she had accordingly allowed her tongue to run riot and, moreover, had promised to acquaint him of anything she might hear. On these means of communication Gonzala relied. Rupert Beauville, quite oblivious, of course, of the plot of which he is intended to become the victim, finishes his dinner, inwardly longing for the homely meals and substantial cookery of his Cornish home, yearning for the day when, his mission ended, he will be free once again—free to return to his friends and all he loves.

"I seem to be no nearer to the end than when I came," he says to himself, and a feeling of loneliness steals over him, as he surveys the remains of his solitary meal and remembers his comfortable dining-room, the faces of his attentive servants, watchful to anticipate his slightest wants; and fancy conjures up the pale face, finely-chiselled features, and violet eyes of Clarice as he saw her last, standing on the steps to wish him God-speed, the dark, time-worn walls of the court forming a background to her tall, slender figure; and, as he has remembered since, though he failed to notice it at the time, a silent tear which she tried hastily to remove from her cheek, so that he might not see her weep for love of him. In his solitude he has thought of all this, although it made but little impression upon him then.

"Hang it, I shall have a fit of the dumps, and no mistake, if I sit moralizing here. I must light a weed and be off, if it is only to stretch my legs. Rupert Beauville, you are an ass; a very pretty fellow to come on an errand of this nature; and, what is more serious, you are getting low-spirited, chicken-hearted, before you have turned one stone likely to help you in unravelling this hateful mystery." Talking thus to himself, and apparently being satisfied on these points, he seizes his hat, lights a cigar, and arming himself with a stout oak stick, more from force of habit than from any idea of using it as a weapon of defence—for since

his stay in Seville he has always carried a small six-chambered revolver, well knowing that sticks are no match for knives—he sallies into the moonlit street. With a long, powerful, swinging stride, which has served him in good stead over many a mile of breezy Cornish upland, and helped him to ascend unflaggingly the rough, brown-backed cars of his native country, he turns his steps in the direction of the Church of the Saint Basilio, his reason for going there being curiosity pure and simple. Past group after group of fantastically-dressed women and men, attired in the height of Spanish dandyism, begirt with brilliant fajas, the folds of which bristle with daggers and knives, perhaps some of the veriest cutthroats and most daring assassins in all Spain, who would as soon kill their man as slice an orange; past all these unheedingly he walks, for he has become accustomed to the usual sights and scenes of Seville, and nothing attracts his attention until he has approached to within a few score yards of the building he is in search of. He turns his head as he passes a posada, from the windows of which the light is streaming and sounds of revelry and mirth are audible. The form of a woman hurrying along catches his eye. There is nothing in her dress to distinguish her from the ordinary passers-by, as she is attired in the usual mantilla, worn as only the Spanish women know how to wear that graceful garment. He is about to remove his gaze from her without further scrutiny, when she moves directly between him and the gas-lit wine shop. One rapid glance—all he is able to obtain—is enough to reveal the beauty of the girl at his side. Her clearly-cut profile and small well-shaped head do not escape his quick eye. She crosses the road in front of him, evidently with the intention of entering the church. Instinctively he follows her, mentally resolving to obtain another glimpse of the fair face if possible. Lightly she ascends the steps and enters the gloomy edifice. He can almost touch her, as side by side with noiseless tread they cross the smooth tessellated stones with which the aisle is paved. When nearly in the centre of the church, the fair unknown threads her way amidst kneeling forms until she too sinks upon her knees. In another instant Rupert, impelled by some inward impulse, has knelt upon the hassock next her; but, alas! not to pray. His thoughts are wandering strangely. The sepulchral gloom is but partially dispelled by the dim rays of the oil lamps and flickering candles. Over the altar is a grandly executed oil painting, a masterpiece by one of Spain's great artists. The walls are bare and cheerless were it not for groups of flags tastefully arranged, their tattered remains, wofully riddled by grape, canister and round shot, telling of many a scene of bloody carnage. But everything within and around him is forgotten, though how vividly he remembers it after. He has but one thought—one idea. The surroundings, strange though they are to him, are as nothing. The woman at

his side engrosses his rapt attention. What secret agencies are at work he knows not. Can it be her beauty that thus lures him on? He is not a susceptible man, and in the old days at home has often seen faces as fair and passed them by almost unnoticed. "Why should he wish or care to trouble himself about this stranger?" he asks himself. The sermon, which is really a long one, seems short to him; and when it is over he rises to his feet with the resolution to know more of her if possible; at any rate, he can make inquiries; he can find out who she is, he tells himself. With this intention he grasps his stick and hat and follows the lady towards the door through which they entered. The church is nearly empty now. The last strains of the music have died away. The white-robed priests have disappeared, and they are the two last to pass under the antique carvings of the Moorish entrance. Rupert is some few yards in the rear, having purposely dropped behind, fearing to annoy or appear rude by his rather pointedly inquisitive behaviour. For the moment he has even lost sight of her, as she has already descended the steps, and is about to increase his pace to overtake her, when his ears are startled by a shriek and a woman's shrill cry for help. In an instant he springs forward, and then he sees the object of all his solicitude in the grasp of a man who is forcibly dragging her along.

"Stop! you scoundrel," he shouts, and before the fellow can let go, Rupert's heavy oak cudgel has descended upon his wrist.

"Take that, you coward, perhaps it may serve to teach you how to respect a defenceless lady in future." With a howl of rage and pain and a volley of foul oaths, the would-be robber or assassin, as Rupert believes him to be, slinks off.

"You are injured, lady, I fear," says Rupert, raising his hat, and striving to make himself understood in bad Spanish and English.

"Oh! no, thanks, *senor*, not in the least," replies the lady, who, it is needless to add, is *Dona Isidore Carmiera*.

"By Jove, it is fortunate that I was so near at hand, or the ruffian would have had it all his own way."

"I must offer you a thousand thanks, *senor*, but for you I might have been murdered," replies *Dona Isidore*, in a low, sweet voice and with well-feigned emotion.

"Thanks are not necessary, lady. I should deem myself but a poor specimen of my country had I failed to do my utmost to rescue you. But you speak English."

"Yes; a little."

"Far better than I shall ever hope to express myself in your language, lady."

"You flatter me, *senor*," replies *Dona Isidore*, with a pretty little shrug of her rounded shoulders and a soft, quick glance of her black eyes—arts which she knows so well how to assume.

"It would be impossible," he replies gallantly.

"But, senor, I must go now. To linger here might be death to both. And if attacked again, your life would not be worth a *real*. The blow you gave that desperado he will not readily forget."

"In that case I wish it had been ten times harder. But it is impossible for me to leave you here. You will permit me to escort you home?"

"As you wish, senor. I have not far to go, but I fear I am causing you endless trouble."

How cleverly she has manœuvred, and skilfully played her part, from beginning to end, of the farce of which poor Rupert, all unconscious that he is the dupe of a love-sick woman, is to be the victim. Dona Isidiore Carmiera, having once put her hand to the plough, is not one to waver or turn back. Even as she talks to him in low coquettish tones she is thinking how best she can worm out his secrets and play into the hands of her lover.

(To be concluded.)

A SUMMER MEMORY.

I REMEMBER an evening,
An evening in one far June,
The sun seem'd loth to leave the sky,
To a young impatient moon.

The yellow sands lay waiting
For the sea's long cool embrace ;
We watch'd the ripples breaking,
Like smiles upon its face.

The green trees nestl'd closer
To the broad breast of the hill ;
The twilight's glamour gather'd,
And the day was with us still.

And a sadness born of beauty,
And a joy to pain akin,
Touch'd all that lay without us,
And hush'd my soul within.

A silence stepp'd between us,
We seem'd to stand apart ;
Yet I THOUGHT your eyes grew tender,
And I KNOW what filled my heart.

But the words were never spoken,
And the distance wider grew,
Till the world of waves was lying
Between me, love, and you ;

No bridge might ever cross it.
I watch'd you turn away,
And I went back to duty,
'Tis all a woman may.

But I never shall be nearer,
The thrilling heights of bliss—
Unless the next world gives us,
The love that here we miss—

Than when in that far June-time,
We seem'd to stand apart,
And I thought your eyes grew tender,
And I KNEW what filled my heart.

MARIE HEDDERWICK-BROWNE.

A LIFE INTEREST.

By MRS. ALEXANDER,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOING O'T," "AT BAY," "BY WOMAN'S WIT,"
"MONA'S CHOICE," ETC.

CHAPTER XXV.

"NEWS OF GEORGE."

WHEN Marjory had replied to Ellis—entreating him on no account to write to her, as his letters would infallibly fall into Mrs. Acland's hands and do them both serious mischief—there seemed no more to be done.

Everything went on as before the important episode of her visit to Langdale Priory; so like was each day to those of the past that Marjory thought at times it was some vivid dream which had broken for a moment the monotonous sleep of her existence, and vanished when the dull dawn of reality summoned her to wait and to endure.

Mrs. Acland troubled her very little; she was in fact plotting in her own mind some more permanent plan for getting her step-daughter out of the house. When obliged to hold any intercourse with her, Mrs. Acland showed a cold, hard aversion, which was even more depressing than active hostility, especially to a vivid nature like Marjory's. For the present she (Marjory) was beaten to the ground, unequal to exertion, and above all, unhinged because she was ashamed of herself.

She could not rouse up to make any attempt at obtaining employment; she feared to advertise, and she shrunk from asking for the introduction to the Governesses' Institution which Mrs. Acland said she could procure. A couple of letters from Dick were the only gleams of comfort in this dreary interval. He spoke of being in London early in December on his way to the South of France, and surprised her by saying he would call at Falkland Terrace, adding, "I should not like to leave without bidding you good-bye."

Time went heavily enough. Marjory—who had quite given up all attempt to ingratiate herself with her father—kept away from him and Mrs. Acland, as much as she could, asserting that she preferred early dinner and tea with the children to the more ceremonious evening meal in the dining-room.

It was little more than a fortnight after Ellis had called when Marjory was summoned to her father's presence. She obeyed with some reluctance, as she had just settled herself to read "*Guy Mannering*" for the third or fourth time, new books not being easily obtainable under Mrs. Acland's rule, and hoping to forget herself for awhile.

Mr. and Mrs. Acland were sitting cosily by the fire: her father in his easy-chair, an evening paper across his knee; her step-mother busy with a piece of fancy stitchery, her little work-table beside her. Neither spoke as Marjory came in.

"You sent for me," she said, pausing near Mr. Acland.

"Yes; I rarely see you, Marjory. I suppose you find your own company best of all. However, I have a letter which concerns you, which will, or ought to, give you much satisfaction. He took it from the mantelpiece, where it lay in readiness, and opened it deliberately. "You had better sit down," said Mrs. Acland. "We shall have some matters to discuss."

Marjory obeyed.

"This letter is from Mrs. Carteret," resumed Mr. Acland, "and contains a very kind invitation." He put on his glasses and proceeded to read aloud:

"DEAR SIR,—If agreeable to you, I should be pleased to receive your daughter, Marjory, for a few months, or longer, to act as my companion and amanuensis; also to do any writing he may require, for Mr. Carteret. Marjory knows the routine of our lives, which is extremely quiet, but she seemed happy while with us, and she reads very nicely. Pray give her my love. As soon as I know when she will start, I will send a cheque for her travelling expenses.

"I should like her to come early next week. She will not need any preparation, for coming to Paris she will not, of course, think of buying anything in London. Our movements are uncertain, but we shall be in Paris for about three weeks.

"With compliments to Mrs. Acland,

"I am, yours faithfully,

"DOROTHEA CARTERET."

Silence ensued when Mr. Acland ceased reading. Marjory had acquired the habit of thinking before speaking in Mrs. Acland's presence. Moreover she saw the work of Ellis in this invitation, and hesitated to accept it.

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Acland sharply, "you ought to consider yourself singularly fortunate, Marjory, to have such a chance offered you. This is Thursday; I suppose you can start on Monday?"

"Do you wish me to go?" asked Marjory, flushing up and looking at her father.

"Can you hesitate yourself?" he returned in a tone of surprise.

"Yes: a little." She felt that by accepting she would be putting herself in the hands of Ellis. "You see," she went on with evident embarrassment, "when I asked Mr. Carteret to let me stay he refused, and now——"

"I must say, Marjory," interrupted Mrs. Acland, "your perversity passes belief. You hate being at home—you will not even dine at table—you seek employment for yourself, and throw it up the moment you get it—now you have an offer any girl would jump at, and you hesitate; there must be something under all this we do not understand."

"It is unaccountable," said Mr. Acland. "I cannot give way to your whims. I insist, Marjory, on your accepting this kind invitation—accepting it gratefully!—it is in every way advantageous."

Marjory did not answer for an instant, while she thought rapidly that her refusal would be indeed unaccountable, suspicious, useless. Then if the Carterets went away to Rome, she should escape Ellis, that is if she ever *could* escape him—and it would be very nice to be with Mrs. Carteret.

"I accept," she exclaimed suddenly, just as Mrs. Acland opened her lips to make some further stinging remark, "but I cannot go till Wednesday," and turning to Mrs. Acland, "I shall do my best to stay away."

"An exceedingly gracious, well-bred speech," observed her step-mother.

"I did not mean to be rude," said Marjory, and then she stopped, appearing to be lost in thought.

"You are an extraordinary girl!" exclaimed Mr. Acland. "I beg you will write a proper letter to Mrs. Carteret."

"I will, I will write at once," rising.

"You had better let us see your letter," said Mrs. Acland.

"Do you want to see it, father?"

"No—yes—that is, I do not care."

"If you are returned on our hand, *now*, Marjory," cried Mrs. Acland, "we will know whose fault it is."

So in less than a quarter of an hour Marjory's fate was fixed, and in spite of her dread of Ellis, her spirits began to rise.

At any rate, she would be out of sight and hearing of Mrs. Acland. As to Ellis, it would surely be a long time before he would be prepared to fulfil the condition on which she had promised to marry him, and probably he would be tired of his fancy by that time. It would be silly, she thought, with the buoyancy of youth, to spoil the present by worrying about an uncertain future or fretting over an irrevocable past. She had done very, very wrong; she was heartily sorry and ashamed of herself. But in future she would try earnestly to be wise and good, conscientious and diligent, and things would come right in the end.

Marjory's preparations were soon made. They consisted in packing up everything that she possessed, in the earnest hope that she might never return to stay under her father's roof again.

Mrs. Carteret was as good as her word. The reply to Mr. Acland's letter contained a handsome cheque, which, after paying her travelling expenses, left Marjory a tolerable supply of pocket-money. "What a delightful thing money is," she wrote to Dick when describing the sudden change in her fortunes, "I wish I could make some; but that seems impossible for women, unless indeed they have 'genius.' I hope I may be in Paris when you pass through, if there is any chance of seeing you, though for other reasons I should be glad to go on soon to Rome."

To this she received a reply the day before she started. "I am glad you are going to escape from home even for awhile, but much as I should like to see you I would be glad to know you were going on to Rome at once. Whatever happens, try to get free from Ellis; I cannot well express the dread I have of the fellow. You'll be miserable if you let yourself be persuaded to marry him."

"I am sure I hope I never shall," murmured Marjory as she watched this missive burning. "But I do not see how I am to break my promise if he chooses to hold me to it."

* * * * *

It was a cold, dull November day, with occasional showers of sleet, when Marjory reached Paris after her long, dreary, lonely journey *viâ* Dieppe. It was strange and depressing to be for the first time plunged into the babel of a strange tongue, for French rapidly spoken by natives is indeed an unknown tongue to most English school-girls, even when supposed to be proficient in that elegant language.

It was reviving to see Virginie's familiar face when she arrived at the Gare St. Lazare. She could not refrain from embracing the friendly lady's-maid, thereby completely winning her. "Ah! mademoiselle is pleased to come to Paris, I believe. I *was* content to receive the orders of madame to meet you. Monsieur and madame await you with impatience. Come, we must await the baggage in the Douane. Mademoiselle must be nearly dead with fatigue," &c., &c.

"Oh no, Virginie; I am quite alive now, and so glad to come."

The drive to Mr. Carteret's apartments, in one of the streets leading from the Champs Elysées to the Rue St. Honoré, was infinitely interesting. Everything was new and unlike anything Marjory had ever seen before. In spite of the untoward weather, which Virginie loudly lamented, she was full of admiration. "If—if only there had been a fine sun, then indeed mademoiselle would be struck with wonder and delight."

Arrived at her destination, Marjory was amused by the extreme politeness of Virginie and that most un-English official the *con-*

cierge to each other, the perpetually recurring "monsieur" and "mademoiselle" which prefaced their sentences. It was all very delightful she thought.

The Carterets were comfortably settled on the second *étage*, and the door was opened by Deacon, Mr. Carteret's grave and incomparable valet—Ellis generally called him Arch-Deacon—opened the door and vouchsafed Marjory a serious smile. Mr. Carteret was ensconced beside the fire in a large low chair, with her tatting and Fairy, as if some potent enchanter had picked her and her belongings up in the Priory and set her down just as she was in the Rue de C——.

"Well, Marjory, I'm glad you were able to come," she said kindly and placidly. "You are not looking very well; rather tired, I suppose? A sea voyage is most disagreeable."

"I am so glad to come, dear Mrs. Carteret," cried Marjory effusively. "It was very good of you to send for me."

"I am pleased to see you. Now you must have some breakfast. Virginie will show you your room. Mr. Carteret is out; he has gone to the Bibliothèque Nationale, though he has a cold: most imprudent. As soon as the carriage comes back I am going to a bazaar. It is a great bore, but I must go. You will be rested by the time I come back, and be able to read probably."

So Marjory was inducted into her new life. It was surprising how soon she began to feel at home, how quickly she settled herself into her tiny bedroom.

Uncle Carteret was fairly gracious and made one or two tart jokes respecting Marjory's expectations of being useful in compiling the great work on which he was now engaged. "You belong to madame now," he said.

"I shall only be too glad to do anything I can for you too, uncle," she returned readily.

The routine of life in Paris differed widely from that of the Priory. Mr. Carteret had much to divert him, and was less oppressive in consequence. He often desired Marjory to copy letters and papers, but the fact that his wife had invited and generally undertaken his niece at her own charge softened his feelings towards that young person considerably.

Mrs. Carteret found much interesting occupation in providing suitable costumes for her *protégée*. Money was never an obstacle to her. If she were not consistently generous it was simply because she never troubled herself to think. When a necessity was brought before her she responded, but she never sought an occasion for liberality. In the case of Marjory her taste was gratified by the success of her efforts to make her young companion what she called "presentable."

It was the third evening after Marjory's arrival; she had not as yet seen Ellis, and had heard very little of him. Curiously enough, she felt slightly offended by his non-appearance, though

half frightened at the idea of encountering him. Disentangling herself was one thing; being "let go" was another.

Uncle Carteret had insisted on his niece being his partner in a game of whist, wherein M. Staroffski, a highly accomplished linguist and universal genius of doubtful nationality, who came two or three times a week to assist Mr. Carteret in his great work, made the fourth. Poor Marjory was suffering acutely from the fearful responsibility laid upon her by her cruel uncle, and the frequent question, "May I ask what you did *that* for?" when dire fate compelled her to play first, a question she never *could* answer, completed her confusion. The sudden announcement of "Lord Beaulieu and Mr. Ellis" put the final touch to her troubles. She felt that she flushed and grew pale as Ellis spoke to her with easy cordiality.

"I was nearly at the end of my patience," cried Mr. Carteret, when greetings were exchanged. "My niece here has been making confusion worse confounded; it will be an act of benevolence to all concerned, Lord Beaulieu, if you will take her place."

"Oh, pray do!" exclaimed Marjory, with such imploring earnestness that they all laughed, and Lord Beaulieu at once complied.

Marjory stood for an instant or two beside her aunt, not knowing exactly what to do or where to go, fearing she might seem either to seek or to avoid Ellis.

"You must not distract the players," said he at length. "Won't you sit down here," placing a chair near the fire, "and tell me when you came." Marjory felt obliged to obey; she caught up Fairy and began stroking his beautiful silky ears to hide the uneasiness which oppressed her.

"So, Marjory, I have you within reach again," resumed Ellis, placing himself between her and the whist party.

"I suppose," she returned, with a pretty embarrassed air and down-cast eyes, "I have *you* to thank for Aunt Carteret's invitation."

"Do you thank me for it?"

"Yes," thoughtfully. "It is much nicer to be here than at home, and I shall be delighted to see Italy."

"I don't fancy you will see Italy as soon as you expect."

"Why?" looking up quickly.

"Because I do not intend you to go so far away. Ah! that does not please you. How inconvenient it must be to have such an expressive face. I shall never forget your look of horror and amazement when I walked into Mrs. Acland's room that day. If she had not been so overwhelmed by my intrusion she would have suspected something under the cards——"

"It was too audacious!" exclaimed Marjory, lowering her voice. Then, at the thought of his extraordinary coolness, a bright, amused smile sparkled in her eyes and parted her lips.

"You are looking pale, as though you had been distressed, but sweeter than ever. I will win you yet, Marjory," whispered Ellis. "I wonder I do not hate you, you wilful little witch. I will hold you to your promise."

"Do not speak in so disagreeable a tone, Mr. Ellis. When *you* are ready to claim my promise, you will find me loyal; in the meantime we can be good friends. If you knew how unhappy I have been you would not worry."

"I worry you, do I? Well, I shall try and make you like Paris, though you do not deserve that I should do so."

"I know that," penitently.

"You must help me to see you alone sometimes."

"Oh no, let us have no more secrets or manœuvring; I cannot bear it."

"Then I must manage alone."

"You are a great deal too clever, Mr. Ellis. I feel as if you could always do as you like."

"You have taught me that I cannot."

"Do let us just be friends for the present, and do not trouble about—about——" She paused.

"Do not tease you with love-making?" said Ellis, translating her thoughts with a hard laugh. "I believe you are half afraid of me."

"Why should I be?" said Marjory indignantly. "I should be ashamed to fear any one."

Ellis did not reply; he rose, and after a short search found a book of photograph views of Paris, and began to talk pleasantly and well of the various places she ought to see.

Then Lord Beaulieu called him to cut in, and spent a few moments in conversing with Marjory. He remembered her connection with his young Palladio, as he called Dick, and said he was then on his way to his place in Dauphiné, where he expected Brand and Dick soon, and after setting them to work he would return to stay with his sister and her father-in-law in Yorkshire. It gave Marjory the keenest pleasure to hear the kindly, good-humoured peer speak in flattering terms of Dick, her friend and brother. What confidence she felt in him; how vividly his advice, "Try and get clear of Ellis," came back to her. She felt almost nervous from the impression that Ellis was tightening his grasp upon her, upon all of them. The expected journey to Rome began to fade from her expectations, and the reality of being a puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous man impressed itself upon her imagination.

* * * * *

A few weeks slipped quietly and rapidly away. Mrs. Carteret had a strong objection to sight-seeing, but she permitted the accomplished Virginie to escort her niece to some of the principal places of interest in the famous capital. Virginie enjoyed the

task of acting as cicerone, and insisted on her companion speaking French. The oddly-assorted pair got on remarkably well and Marjory often looked back to their expeditions with amusement and pleasure.

During this time she saw very little of Ellis. He called upon Mr. Carteret regularly, but did not appear to make any attempt at private conversation with Marjory. Indeed he seemed to mask his batteries with peculiar care, so much so that Marjory began to question the sincerity of his assertion that he dare not betray his intention towards herself to Mr. Carteret. "He has such influence with my uncle," she thought, "that he might persuade him to consent, but there is no knowing what he really wants and wishes."

Meantime Mr. Carteret was so fascinated by M. Staroffski, who could not leave Paris, that his desire to push on to Rome grew fainter every day.

"I suppose Marjory has not been to any of the theatres yet?" said Ellis one Sunday when he had come in to breakfast. He called her Marjory now even to Mr. and Mrs. Carteret.

"Not yet," replied her aunt; "I have not thought about it. I must ask the de Lacey Browns or Miss Valentine to take her when they are going. I could not bear the heat and discomfort myself."

"Oh, no! of course not," cried Marjory, blushing at the idea of giving trouble.

"If you will allow me, I shall be happy to take her to see a very pretty fairy extravaganza that is going on at the Porte St. Martin. It will amuse her more than the Comédie Française in the present condition of her French. Eh! Miss Marjory?"

"How very good of you," she exclaimed with sparkling, grateful eyes.

"Pray, when did you turn philanthropist or philanderer?" asked Mr. Carteret looking up from the *Figaro*, which he was absorbing with his morning's allowance of Burgundy.

"My natural amiability and consideration for others has always been the same," returned Ellis with great composure.

"Can Madame Petroskoff spare you?" continued Mr. Carteret with an unpleasant laugh.

"Certainly! she has a great respect for family duty. Then Wednesday next is an off-night. It is a Russian saint's day or eve, and she is obliged to go to a night service," said Ellis carelessly.

"You really should not talk in such an unguarded manner," observed Mrs. Carteret with disapprobation. "If you can take Marjory to the theatre without inconvenience, Ralph, I see no objection. You really are third cousins, once removed, and you are very obliging to think of it. Marjory will be charmed."

"I shall be very glad to go indeed, if it does not interfere with

Mr. Ellis—or—or bore him," said Marjory with a demure, mischievous smile.

"I will endure the boredom for the sake of the relations—I mean the relationship between us," returned Ellis laughing good-humouredly, but with emphasis which Marjory understood. "It is to be Wednesday then? I must call early for you. These long fairy pieces begin at some hideous hour; besides if it is a fine dry night you might like to walk part of the way up the Boulevards. I fancy you have never seen them lit up. You had better have an early dinner; so shall I."

"Thank you! I should like walking up the Boulevards immensely."

"Mr. Staroffski is in the study, sir," announced Deacon.

Mr. Carteret arose quickly and shuffled out of the room.

"And about her dress? what shall Marjory wear, Ralph?" asked Mrs. Carteret.

"Oh! a toilette de promenade, of course. Then on Wednesday I will be here at six-thirty, unless you hear from me to the contrary. I shall not be able to see you before, Mrs. Carteret, as I shall be a good deal engaged for the next two or three days."

Going to the theatre was a joy rarely but deeply enjoyed by Marjory, and she looked forward with keenest pleasure to the treat promised her. That Ellis was to be her companion did not exactly enhance it, yet it was not absolutely a drawback. He could be a very agreeable companion, especially when he refrained, as he had lately, from making love to her. Moreover the sense of being flattered by his admiration a little counteracted her distrust of him. If only he had not the terrible power which her flight with him had put into his hands she might have liked him better.

Still Marjory had undoubtedly a degree of satisfaction in putting on her pretty winter bonnet, adorned with sable tails, and a brown cloth dolman which suited her slight figure, tying a pale pink handkerchief coquettishly round her throat, and fitting on a new pair of tan gloves. Virginie protested that "everything went well," as she handed her her little velvet and fur muff, and Marjory found herself ready in excellent time.

Ellis did not keep her waiting. He too seemed in a festive mood. After exchanging a few words with Mrs. Carteret he turned to Marjory, and with an expressive look which told her she had not dressed herself in vain, proposed they should set out.

It was a fine, crisp, frosty evening—crisp, but not too cold for enjoyment—a bright moon was silvering the fountains in the Champs Elysées and casting shadows of the leafless trees on the dry clean footway.

"How beautiful everything looks," cried Marjory, "and how much nicer it is to walk than to drive."

"And what a relief it is to have a word with you out of earshot of those respectable mummies, Uncle and Aunt Carteret! Take my arm, Marjory; we shall soon be in a more crowded thoroughfare. I almost wish you had put on a thicker veil."

"Why? are you ashamed to be seen with me?"

"I will not rise to that bait, you unsophisticated little coquette! But I have a scheme in my head and do not want people to recognize you."

"A scheme? What scheme?"

"I will tell you, and you *must* not say no, Marjory," pressing her arm to his side. "I do not want to waste this precious evening in a crowd of strangers where we cannot speak a word in safety! I want you to dine with me at a *café* I often go to. We will have a private room—a long *tête-à-tête*! I have a thousand things to say to you—suggestions to make—hints to give you. Fancy the long fast I have had from anything like a confidential intercourse. I looked in at that rubbish they are acting at the Porte St. Martin last night, and can tell you enough to supply a description for Mrs. Carteret's benefit. Come, dearest; we are almost man and wife, you know! It will be a taste of heaven after all the long constraint which *you* have never tried to lighten."

His words struck terror to Marjory's heart, and shivered her anticipations of a happy evening. He was as determined as ever.

"No, Mr. Ellis, I cannot, it would be wrong in every way. I never will lend myself to any deception again, if I can possibly help it. Aunt Carteret, too, deserves better treatment from me, and I would not like it at all."

"But I have a right to be heard. I insist on your giving me the opportunity," said Ellis imperatively. "Come Marjory, I will take no refusal, I have much to say to you."

"Then say it as we walk along," returned Marjory, whose heart was beating fast. "I do not know what it can be; there is nothing to plan or to talk about now; there is nothing to do but to wait—until——"

She stopped in some confusion.

"Until we can marry openly," added Ellis impatiently. "Yes, there is much more; besides I want to clear myself from the absurd insinuations of old Carteret about that Russian woman."

"I assure you I do not want to hear anything about her."

"But I wish to explain. In short, I am resolved you shall spend this evening with *me*; I can so rarely see you or have a word with you, I must put some pressure to gain my point." He caught and held tightly the hand that lay on his arm, looking eagerly round for a *fiacre*.

"But I am quite as resolved *not* to go with you," cried Marjory, now thoroughly frightened.

Something hard in the expression of her companion's face, something in his eyes, made her feel strongly inclined to run away.

"Ah, there is a *fiacre*," cried Ellis, drawing her towards it. "Come, Marjory, you would not make a scene."

"Yes, I would," she cried firmly, "and if you do not let me go, I will." She looked defiantly into his fierce dark eyes. "This is more like revenge than affection, Mr. Ellis; nothing shall tempt me to go with you *this* time."

Ellis suddenly let go her hand, and stood an instant still and silent.

"Marjory, there is something under this resistance I do not understand; love for another must steel you against me. But I warn you, that I hold your future in my hand; it depends on yourself whether I make or mar it, you cannot defy me."

"I do not want to defy you, but I will *not* let myself fear you," retorted Marjory bravely. "How can I love you when you disturb and distress me?"

"And why do you risk turning me from a lover to an enemy?" asked Ellis, recovering himself. "I see you would willingly free yourself from me altogether; but you never can."

"I will be true to my promise—if you do not give me cause to break it. I shall go back to Aunt Carteret at once."

"No—no—that would never do, we must go and see this infernal play," said Ellis, with something like his usual voice. "That is if you will so far trust yourself with such a villain."

"Of course I will; now you understand me."

"Understand you? that I never shall, your obstinacy is incomprehensible;" he signed to a passing vehicle and directed the driver to the Porte St. Martin.

But the pleasure of the evening was over. Not all the gorgeous beauty of scenery or costumes could make Marjory oblivious of the short, but sharp and decisive conflict which she had just won, what she felt would be a costly victory, while Ellis made no attempt to conceal his annoyance. He was profoundly silent, and when he left her at the door of her uncle's apartment, he pressed her hand almost painfully, saying in a low voice, "I shall not soon forget my obligations to you for cheating me out of my dinner and a good deal more."

Nor did Marjory recover her spirits for many days, during which she rarely saw Ellis, as he was particularly "ta'en up wi' affairs o' the state."

December was half over, and Marjory was beginning to feel anxious for tidings of her brother. He was an indifferent correspondent at all times, and as his ship was making a regular trading voyage, partly for business, but chiefly to benefit the favourite son of the shipowner, Marjory never knew where a letter would find him; he was, therefore, deprived of the reminders he needed. Dick kept her acquainted with his movements, or rather his intended movements, as the work on which he was engaged took longer than he or Brand expected, and Marjory began to look for his promised visit.

One dull afternoon, more like a day in London than in Paris, Marjory had gone into the Rue St. Honoré to do some commissions for Mrs. Carteret. On her return she found the carriage at the door; she hastened upstairs, for she was to accompany her aunt to a solemn afternoon tea at Mrs. de Lacey Brown's, and feared she might have kept her waiting.

The sound of a familiar voice struck her ear as she entered the room, and behold—on the hearth-rug in earnest speech with Mrs. Carteret—stood Dick Cranston.

"And here she is," said the former, as if she (Marjory) had been the subject of conversation.

"Oh! Dick! I thought you would never come," Marjory exclaimed, as he sprang forward and grasped her hand.

"I only arrived this morning," he said, noting that her lips quivered, and that if her eyes sparkled with pleasure they were dewy with starting tears; she had so much to tell him that she did not, could not, write; he would counsel her, and give her courage; she had longed so ardently to tell him everything that now he was come she was strangely moved.

"You are looking well, Marge! better than when I saw you last."

"No wonder, I am so much happier."

"Well, I will leave you to talk with your brother, Marjory," said Mrs. Carteret, who was in her out-door dress. "You will have a good deal to say to each other, I dare say. No one will disturb you, for Mr. Carteret will not be in till late. Good morning, Mr. Cranston," and with a parting kiss to Fairy she left the room.

Dick looked after her, then at Marjory, and evidently hesitated as to what he should say.

"Do sit down!" she exclaimed. "My heart is so full. I have so much to say to you that I do not know where to begin; and you, Dick," scanning his face anxiously, "you have something unpleasant to tell me. Is it about your mother?"

"No, Marge!" and he sat down by her on the sofa; "it is about George. He has met with a bad accident."

"Have you to tell me that he is—dead," she whispered, while she grew pale with fear.

"No, no, Marge; I trust he has many years before him. His arm has been broken, and so badly they have been obliged to amputate it."

"But he will live? My poor dear George! I have been wondering he did not write. Tell me all; there is something more?"

"Yes, he has proved himself a fine, plucky fellow. It seems that one of the crew was an uncanny sailor, who used to talk to himself and cut capers, and young Rennie, the invalid lad, used to laugh at him, and gave him dire offence. One day as they lay

becalmed on the voyage from Madras to Rangoon, having some Government stores on board; this unlucky beggar suddenly went raving mad and rushed on Rennie with an iron bar. The only one near was George, who threw himself between them and received the blow intended for Rennie, on his arm. Then a struggle took place, in which George received other injuries before the madman could be taken off him."

Marjory clasped her hands, uttering a low exclamation of horror.

"Unfortunately in the fight the broken bone got through the skin, so they were obliged to amputate the arm as soon as they reached Rangoon, and George, poor fellow, had a bad touch of fever. However, he was decidedly better when the captain wrote, and he and young Rennie are to start for home as soon as George is fit to be moved."

"And how have you heard this; does my father know?"

"Yes; Mr. Rennie, one of the partners in Rennie, Duncan and Co., Rennie's father, came to the office and gave Mr. Acland the captain's letter. Mr. Cross had it when I called on him yesterday, so I saw it too. Mr. Cross said that Mr. Rennie could hardly speak when he tried to express his gratitude to George for saving his boy."

"Ah, Dick! I am afraid George is worse than you say," cried Marjory, her lips quivering, but too shocked and alarmed for tears.

"No, Marge, I tell you exactly what I was told, and I believe you will see him soon, for Mr. Rennie has telegraphed directions that both the lads are to be sent home by steamer as soon as possible."

"And I shall be away when he comes! I will not stay here. George may want care and nursing; he may want *me*!"

"Do nothing in a hurry, Marge. You will not easily find such a comfortable home as this."

When Marjory had recovered something like composure they discussed this question, and she finally yielded to Dick's advice to stay where she was till George was actually in England.

"I suppose my father or Mrs. Acland will take the trouble of informing me of this terrible business."

"Of course. You see they only knew the day before yesterday."

"I am so glad you were able to come. Everything would have seemed infinitely worse if I had read it in a letter; and you really do think George will recover?"

"I do really." There was a pause.

"Is my father very much distressed?" asked Marjory.

"No doubt he is, but Mr. Cross said nothing about it. I think my mother will take care of George when he comes back; you see she rather liked him, and it would *look* well."

"Yes, she may for a time. But if she comes to think him a

burden—and she soon will, for I suppose George cannot go to sea again—then he will know what *I* suffered.”

“That’s likely enough. I wish I had not been obliged to bring you such bad news. Now tell me about yourself. How is it you have not gone on to Rome? though I am glad you have not, or I should not have had this glimpse of you.”

“We have not gone on to Rome,” said Marjory, raising her eyebrows with a pretty, impatient expression, “chiefly, I believe, because Mr. Ellis chooses we should remain.”

“Oh, and how—how do you and he get on?” and Dick looked searchingly, almost sternly, into her eyes.

“Very badly; that is, we have had another quarrel—and oh, Dick, you may despise me if you like, but I must confess I am awfully afraid of him.”

“Why?” asked Dick frowning.

“Why, because I have a kind of feeling that he dislikes me, even when he—he talks all sorts of nonsense. I am sure he would like to revenge himself in some way. How I wish I had never seen him, or rather how I wish I had been true to my own sense of right and never gone away with him. If you knew how awfully ashamed I am when I think of it! and I know you are ashamed of me, too.” She coloured crimson, cheeks and ears, even the delicate morsel of throat seen above the lace which edged her collar, as she covered her face in her hands and tried to keep down the quick sobs which rose in her throat.

“No, Marge, dear, I am not,” said Dick tenderly, “I do not blame *you*. My mother—aye, and your own father are at the bottom of that mischief. But I cannot deny it has been an awful misfortune. I wish——” his mouth grew hard and set as he spoke, “I wish we could have the old duelling days back for a spell. I would pick a quarrel with Ellis and shoot him as unhesitatingly as I would a mad dog, before he should interfere with you, Marge!”

“Why, Dick, you look as if you meant it,” she cried, gazing at him surprised.

“I do!” Then smiling and trying to speak in a different tone: “It would be justifiable homicide. I am not a bad shot, I assure you!” But Marjory was silent, struck by the extraordinary change which had come over the once despised, detested monster. She felt in some vague yet convincing way that Ellis could never manage or blind Dick with his sophistry and sinuosities; she half unconsciously put out her hand and laid it on his, where Dick let it rest without trying to hold it. “Promise me,” he resumed, “that you will never consent to anything he proposes, or grant anything he asks, without consulting *me*. I know little or nothing of his world, but I do know what is good for you, Marge. What I fear most of all is your growing to love him! It will be all over with your happiness if you do.”

"There is no chance of that—less than there ever was. No, Dick! do not look at the clock; you need not go yet."

"In a few minutes I fear I must. I am to meet Brand and go with him to do some commissions for Lord Beaulieu, who expects us to-morrow."

"To-morrow," cried Marjory, her eyes filling, "then I shall not see you again."

"Not for some time," he returned, pressing her hand, "and then I hope you will be free of that fellow."

"Well, I hope so; he will surely be tired of me by that time! and tell me how things are going with you and Mr. Brand."

"Very well. He is cheering up since we left Edinburgh. We are to have rooms in a wing of the old Chateau at Fleury St. Jean and very decent pay. I expect to enjoy the work; in short, it is the best bit of luck that ever fell in a fellow's way. Now I must be going. And when do you think George may be home?" Some minutes passed in discussing probabilities respecting the brother they both loved so heartily.

"But I must not stay," cried Dick at length. "God bless you, Marge;" he raised and kissed her hand.

"Oh, don't do that, Dick! it is like Mr. Ellis."

"Does he only kiss your *hand*?" asked Dick sharply, his eyes questioning hers.

"Only my hand," returned Marjory steadily, though a vivid blush rose in her cheek and faded as she exclaimed while the tears brimmed over, "I wish—I wish I could always live with you and George!"

"And I wish I could spend every hour of my life with you!" said Dick passionately, adding in an altered tone, "that is till you found some one you could love better than either of us!"

"I do not think I ever shall. I have been so wretched since Mr. Ellis asked me to marry him that I feel as if I should never care for any companion but my brother."

"Ah! Marge, you will leave us yet. Dear sister, good-bye." He drew her to him gently and kissed her cheek, then hastily left the room. Marjory threw herself into a chair and wept without restraint. Her tears however were not bitter; through the grief and anxiety of the hour stole the consoling reflection, "I did not think Dick cared so much for me! What a good kind fellow he is!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FRESH START.

A NEW year, the third in this veracious history, had opened on two troubled spirits with whom, out of the many thousands which ache and palpitate, our story is concerned.

Away in the quiet decorous routine of Uncle Carteret's household Marjory watched and waited for news from her brother, or of his arrival—waited with a sore and anxious heart.

At home in Falkland Terrace Mrs. Acland pondered moodily on the ill-fortune which sent back George a sickly cripple, to be an unavoidable burden on her hands.

To turn a young man so circumstanced out of his father's house was not to be thought of. He could not be sent back to sea, and he was fit for little ashore. Still, he was more bearable than Marjory, less likely to do mischief, or to interfere with his father.

To Mr. Acland she talked soothingly, with many expressions of sympathy and regret for the poor dear boy's sufferings.

Mr. Acland himself was a good deal disturbed and distressed. He was grieved for his son, and touched by the account of his sufferings, but he was also much concerned that he should be thrown on his hands. Mr. Rennie—whose son George had saved—wrote in the warmest terms of his gratitude, and expressed his intention of calling on Mr. Acland when he came up to meet the two young men. Mrs. Rennie had added a glowing ungrammatical postscript.

Mr. Rennie was the head of the firm, and resided in the neighbourhood of that busy, well-known seaport, Dockborough. Here he had started in life, and risen to be head of the business he had enlarged and extended. The London house was but a branch establishment, which he visited occasionally, while he personally directed the chief office.

A telegram from the expectant father announced the arrival of George and his friend at Southampton rather sooner than Mrs. Acland expected, and the next day Mr. Rennie himself escorted the invalid to his home.

When Mrs. Acland beheld her stepson, pale, bent, his empty sleeve fastened up under the short remnant of the arm he had lost, and leaning the other on that of a tall, big bony man, with profuse sandy hair and beard, she instinctively assumed the motherly tenderness calculated to impress the wealthy shipowner.

"My poor, dear boy!" she almost whispered as she embraced him. "We have been looking and longing for you. We must nurse you up now we have you safe at home. You are not looking so ill as I expected," and, turning a little aside, she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes. "How good of you, Mr. Rennie—I presume it is Mr. Rennie—to bring our dear boy back yourself." With her sweetest smile, "If Mr. Acland were here he would thank you better than I can."

"I doot that," returned Rennie abruptly, in a voice from which a sojourn of forty years in the land of the Saxon had not banished the strong Scotch intonation. "Anyway, I'd do more for the lad that saved my son. He looks a bit shaken; but they tell me he is just twice the man he was when he went on board at Galle.

We'll have him down at Craigneish—that's my place beside Dockborough. The sea breezes will set him up."

They had gone into the dining-room while he spoke, and George dropped into a chair. "I'm awfully tired," he said rather querulously. "Where's Marge?"

"She is away in Paris, dear, with your Uncle Carteret, and enjoying herself."

"Oh! I *am* sorry. I did hope to find Marge here. Did you tell her I was coming?" asked George, as if going to burst into tears.

"Of course I told her, but I fancy she had a lot of engagements. Now, dear, you must have a glass of wine—you look faint—and you will allow me to offer *you* a glass also, Mr. Rennie?"

"Aw! yes—I'll just drink my friend George's health and complete recovery, which I have no doubt will be speedy with your good care," returned Rennie, who had the tendency of his countrymen to credit a handsome woman with many virtues.

"Allow me to serve you myself; we live in a very homely, modest way," said Mrs. Acland, hastening, with graceful alacrity, to produce glasses, biscuits and a decanter of sherry from the sideboard.

"And it's the right way, too," said Rennie approvingly; "a handsome woman never looks so handsome to my eye as when she's bustling about her house and making her guests happy. Now, my lad, as I have seen you safe in port, and in this good lady's care, I'll bid you farewell for the present. Forbes and I are going down to Dockborough to-night. His mother is just wearying to set eyes on him, and no wonder; she was very near never seeing him again. Good evening, Mrs. Acland. I'll be back again in a week, and give you a call. I suppose I'll find Mr. Acland any time at his office?"

"Certainly, or he would keep any appointment you might wish to make."

"Naw—naw. I'll not break up his time—time's money, you know; very pleased to have made your acquaintance," and Mr. Rennie strode off to his cab.

"Well, dear George, let me help you off with your coat and muffler," said Mrs. Acland kindly, while she mentally marked the retreating visitor as a man to be carefully cultivated.

"Thank you. I am rather helpless still, but not half as bad as I was," and George rose with a brave effort to be composed—to resist the sense of depression resulting from fatigue and disappointment. "The worst of it is," he continued, sinking again into his chair, "I am so confoundedly weak; I can hardly keep from blubbering like a baby every now and then. I wish Marge had been here—she has so much 'go' in her. She would have cheered me up. When is she coming?"

"I cannot say, George. It would not be well to take her away

from people who may be of use to her, and from the luxuries and amusements she might not care to leave. I am afraid you must be satisfied with *me*, Georgie," standing by him and stroking his rough and somewhat neglected hair.

"Oh! you are very nice and kind; but—but I do think Marjory would like to come to me—if she knew I wanted her."

"Well, time will show, only you know with so many to provide for, it is a serious matter to withdraw her from——"

"Oh! don't fancy I intend to be a burden," interrupted George, flushing hotly; "as soon as I am a bit stronger, I fancy Rennie will take me into his office. Forbes said as much; and, you see, it's the left arm that's gone. I can write still."

"My dear boy! do you imagine such sordid ideas enter into your father's head or mine?"

"I'm sure I can't tell. I know they come often enough to me."

"Well, pray get rid of them. Here is your father."

Mr. Acland was really affected on meeting his son. He actually hastened into the room without stopping to take off his overcoat. George had never opposed or irritated him. Moreover, he had found favour in the eyes of his all-powerful wife. Finally, with all his professional precision, he had true English sympathy with personal prowess, and was proud of the pluck and resolution shown by his boy.

George was cheered and gratified by the emotion his father displayed. His faith in Mrs. Acland had been a good deal frayed by Marjory's observations and his later experiences, but about his father he had no doubt.

Dinner, therefore, passed harmoniously. Mr. Acland produced a bottle of champagne to drink his son's health, and directed Mrs. Acland to have him overhauled by some high-class doctor, in order to ascertain the course of treatment most likely to restore his strength and general health—a suggestion which, for no particular reason, was never carried out.

Mrs. Acland soon perceived the usual result of suffering in her stepson. He was slightly peevish and impatient, a remarkable change in so sweet a temper, and when the children, who were at first afraid of him, began to take liberties, they were a source of annoyance and irritation. Of this Mrs. Acland took a note, and entered it to his debit. Nevertheless, the first week at home saw the disabled young sailor stronger and calmer.

The day after his arrival, finding that Mrs. Acland could not spare time to write, he made his first effort to use a pen since the loss of his arm. It was a trying affair. He was always going to place his left elbow on the table, having a curious sensation that elbow and hand were still there. Then it was so hard to keep his paper steady. He was obliged to find a weight to lay on it. This showed him the difficulties which might interfere with his success

as a clerk. In spite of all, however, he managed a short letter to his sister, which he strove to make cheerful, but into which a tone of depression would creep, and then he waited impatiently for a reply; but a week passed, and Marjory made no sign.

Mr. Rennie, however, was true to his promise, and made his appearance, after luncheon, about the date he had fixed. He looked red and radiant. His light grey eyes had a pleasant twinkle, his large strong mouth a kindly look of benevolent satisfaction, very different from its expression when closing a bargain or dictating the terms of a contract.

He was very cordially received, and ushered into the study, where George was lying on the sofa, a cheerful fire brightening the half light of a chill January afternoon, and sufficient evidence of needlework on the table to suggest industry, not disorder.

"Well, my laddie," he exclaimed, as soon as they had exchanged salutations and resumed their seats—(Mrs. Acland on the sofa beside her stepson)—"I've had a 'crack' with your father this morning, and he has quite come round to my views. I've been proposing that as you must give up the sea, you enter my office as a clerk. I'll give you a decent salary to begin with, as I consider I am bound to do, and you shall creep up if you are so minded. There's a careful old body, Mrs. Acland," turning to her, "that has charge of our offices, and lives in the rooms above. Your boy shall have free quarters there for a year or two, till I can honestly raise his salary, so he shall be properly looked after. Mrs. Stokes—that's our caretaker—will market and manage for him better than any mere landlady, to say nothing of Mrs. Rennie herself, who is just longing to cosset him and see that he wants nothing."

"Oh! thank you," cried George, his wan cheek colouring with pleasure. "The only thing I fear is being a helpless log—a burden on my father——" his voice broke, and he stopped abruptly.

"You are infinitely good," murmured Mrs. Acland, taking George's hand and stroking it.

"Hoot toot!" cried Mr. Rennie, "there's nothing to make a hubble about. What I want is to set the laddie on his feet. He'll make the going himself as he gathers strength. His captain gives him a first-rate character, and when I saw my boy's mother thanking God for giving him back to her, while tears of joy ran down her cheeks, I promised myself that the lad who saved him should never want a friend." The kindly canny Scot finished abruptly and blew his nose like a trumpet.

"I am sure," began Mrs. Acland blandly, "my husband and myself feel warmly your great kindness and generosity. After all George only did his duty, and——"

"And if he had not thrown himself between a powerful maniac and his victim, I should be mourning my son, while yours would still be following the career he had chosen," interrupted Mr.

Rennie. His last words, however, escaped Mrs. Acland; her attention was attracted by the sound of feet in the hall and the bump as of a heavy box being set down.

The next instant the door opened impetuously and Marjory appeared—Marjory, very pale, with disordered hair escaping from under her hat, and eyes that looked unusually large. She paused an instant, looked eagerly round, and then darting to George, threw her arms round him. "My dear, dear brother," she cried. "Thank God! You are safe, and—and better; better than I hoped you would be."

Mr. Rennie observed that the colour came with a rush to her cheek, and then left her paler than before.

"Oh! Marge, this is jolly," exclaimed George, returning her embrace, while his voice faltered and his lips twitched. "Where—how have you come?"

"Yes, Marjory; how in the world have you managed to get away?" asked Mrs. Acland in a voice from which she strove in vain to banish all acrimony.

"Have you not had my letter? I wrote three days ago, as soon as I had explained everything to Mrs. Carteret, and she agreed to let me come and see George before we went on to Italy. Oh! George, I knew no rest after I had your little note—dear, dear George." Her voice broke, but she struggled bravely for composure, and even managed to smile upon him in a way that Mr. Rennie thought infinitely pathetic. She was evidently overcome by the terrible change in his appearance, yet resolute to conceal her impression. "They are all and all to each other," thought the shrewd shipowner, "and she is just the age of my own girlie."

"This is your own sister, I suppose?" he asked.

"She is."

"Ah! missie, I suppose you're thinking it is hard your brother should be so mauled and mangled for the sake of a stranger."

"No, no," cried Marjory, smiling through the tears that *would* come. "I would not have had him do differently. Thank God, he was able to save your son for you and for his mother, his *own* mother," her voice quivered, as she spoke, with an emphasis she could not help; "but it is—it is a little distressing at first, and I have had a tiresome journey."

"You are a brave lassie," said Mr. Rennie admiringly, "and your brother shall not be the worse, as far as his career goes, for his pluck and generosity. I have settled with your father to-day," and he proceeded to recapitulate his plans for George's benefit. While he spoke Mrs. Acland slipped noiselessly from the room to give the directions Marjory's unexpected return necessitated.

"This is good news," she exclaimed, clasping her hands. "What I dreaded more than anything else was his having to

hang on in idleness at home. He will soon be able to begin. Do you suffer any pain now, Georgy?" nestling close to him, and gently, fearfully touching the stump of his arm.

"Oh, no; at least very little. Isn't it lucky the fellow didn't break my leg? But I say, Marge, can you stay all the time I am here? It is so miserable without you."

"Yes, I can; I wish—oh, *how* I wish I could always live with you and take care of you! You will want me for some time to come, George."

"Well, can't you come and stay with your brother for a bit?" suggested Mr. Rennie, who was greatly touched and interested by both brother and sister. "If you don't mind roughing it in the bachelor's den he is going to have at our diggings, it might be better for both of you; not that I suppose *you* would stay long there, my lassie, it's too high up, and too much out of the world."

"Ah, no; it would be heavenly," said Marjory, her voice unsteady and full of feeling; "George and I have no one in the world but each other, and to be of some use, after wondering all my life why I was sent here to be merely an encumbrance, would be like getting into a better world."

"If that's your way of thinking!" said Mr. Rennie, rubbing his hands, "you are the right sort. Let us talk to your father and mother about it. I don't see why it could not be managed."

"You do not know all the difficulties," returned Marjory, colouring vividly, and undoing her cloak with trembling fingers. "I dare not trouble my father, and I could not be a burden to poor George."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" said Mr. Rennie meditatively. While he paused Mrs. Acland returned.

"I am afraid, Marjory," she said, "your room will not be very comfortable. Had you given me notice——"

"But I wrote—I did indeed," interrupted Marjory, "but I did not post the letter myself, so I fear it was forgotten; French servants are so careless. As to my room, never mind about that. How are the children?"

Before Mrs. Acland could reply Mr. Rennie broke in:

"It seems, Mrs. Acland, that this young lady thinks her brother would be the better of her company for a year or so, and I am much of the same opinion myself. What do you say?"

Mrs. Acland took a rapid mental glance at the proposition. So long as Marjory was out of the house it mattered little where she was, and the seeming would be quite as fair whether she were with her uncle or her brother, but residence with the latter implied demands on the paternal purse.

"I am sure it is a very kind thought," she said smiling sweetly; "but I could not answer off-hand. Mr. Acland, of course, is the person to consult, and apart from all other considerations it might

not be well to withdraw Marjory from an aged and wealthy relative who is much attached to her."

"Attached to me!" echoed Marjory in such a tone of amazement that Mr. Rennie smiled.

"And they are going so far away—to Italy," she added with doleful emphasis.

"Well, well, missie, if you are ready to give up a fortune and a journey to Italy for your brother's sake your wishes deserve to be considered. I shall be a few days longer in town, so I'll have a talk with Mr. Acland and see what is to be done. Meantime you'll be glad to see the back of me as I am but a stranger."

"No, no! certainly not," cried Marjory, "you seem a real friend."

"This is a very impetuous child," said Mrs. Acland smiling and laying her hand caressingly on Marjory's shoulder, "you must excuse her want of manner."

"Want of manner," repeated Mr. Rennie rising, "I hope she may never learn anything different. Now good-day to you. There's my card, but of course you'll always find me in Fenchurch Street. As soon as you are able, one of our shipping clerks shall give you some hints in book-keeping (of which, it seems, you know something) and also respecting our particular business. Good morning, Mrs. Acland. Your boy is looking better already. Let him have his sister to look after him, and I have a shrewd notion you will save her keep in doctors' bills." He shook hands heartily with each, adding a friendly slap on George's shoulder, and left them.

"Isn't he a trump?" cried George. "I feel ever so much stronger since he came. Who could fancy he is the man all the fellows about the office talk of as if he were a 'fee fa fum' ogre who'd eat you up about the smallest matter. Forbes is just like him, only more of an Englishman."

"Well, Marjory," said Mrs. Acland, who had followed Mr. Rennie into the hall, "I wonder what your father will say to you for rushing off in this ridiculously inconsiderate way!—casting from you the chances which your position with the Carterets offered, without a thought for the heavy burdens your poor father has to bear. Pray how did you get the money to travel. I should like to know? I trust you did not borrow and expect us to repay it."

"Indeed I did not," indignantly. "I simply gave George's poor little letter to Mrs. Carteret, who has been so very, *very* good to me of late. She cried too—I never thought she could shed a tear—then she said I should go home if I wished it, and gave me the money. I don't think she ever knew before how people can love each other. If I did not believe there was a chance of living with George I would rather live with her than any one else."

"I warn you there is little or no chance of your setting up with George. It would be too unprincipled to ask your father to support you when you can have a luxurious home for the taking, and you cannot expect George to share half a loaf with you."

"Yes, but I would, though," he exclaimed. "Marge and I could do on very little. It would be better to live on one meal a day and be together than have half the continent of Europe between us."

"You are the most idiotic young people I ever met," said Mrs. Acland contemptuously, as she rang for the gas to be lit. "You had better go and take your things off, Marjory. From being like a ghost you have made your face as red as fire with your tears and nonsense. I hate sentimentality."

The days following the reunion of brother and sister, though Mrs. Acland did her best to render them irksome, were jewelled with many a pleasant moment. Fire in the schoolroom was strictly forbidden, thus George and his sister were compelled to be pretty constantly in the society of their stepmother. But there were few days when she did not go out, and the two young creatures made profound calculations as to how much they could live on, wildly under-estimating the cost of keeping body and soul together.

Then when the weather was fine and the air still, they made excursions to look at the shops—Marjory full of care for her precious invalid and guarding him from rude contact with wonderful adroitness. Sometimes they indulged in a cup of tea or a shilling drive in a hansom, which reckless outlay was defrayed by Marjory, as poor George's purse was quite empty. Then there were one or two interesting letters from Dick, and even Mrs. Carteret wrote a few kindly lines. These were comforting circumstances, yet they hardly atoned to Marjory for the cold disapprobation which her father steadily evinced towards her, and which made her feel more than ever an *un-favoured* guest.

At length came a glorious afternoon when George returned from an interview with Mr. Rennie, who had gone and come in the interim, and announced that he was to begin at a hundred a year, which after two years—if he proved worth it—should be increased according to his usefulness. "Why, Marge, we can live like fighting cocks on two pounds a week," was his concluding sentence.

"Yes, of course," cried Marjory with sparkling eyes. "It is splendid! for from what you tell me you are not to pay any rent. Mr. Rennie must mean us to live together." Neither of the young financiers reflected there were fifty-two weeks in a year. Nor did they reckon on Mrs. Acland's covert resistance to their scheme. Still they held steadily to it; and Mr. Acland, who was much influenced by the opinion of a stronger and more prosperous

man than himself, was ashamed to refuse his consent to what seemed so natural and suitable an arrangement. Marjory represented that she could do with an allowance for her dress, that it would cost George very little more to keep her than to keep himself, that there was much in the way of mending and making which he would have to pay for if she were not there to do it for him, and much more.

At last perseverance was rewarded and Marjory wrung a reluctant consent from father and stepmother. Then came the only painful bit of the whole business—writing to Mrs. Carteret, who replied very kindly though her expressions were curt and dry. She desired that Marjory should write to her from time to time as she would always feel an interest in her.

Mrs. Acland was excessively annoyed at the turn things had taken. She felt herself virtually defeated, and added another count to the heavy list of Marjory's evil deeds, which she promised to pay in full.

It was arranged that George should pay a short visit to his friend, Forbes Rennie, take his place in the office, and have things in readiness for his sister when she came to join him.

All through this period of close friendly intercourse Marjory constantly debated within herself, "Shall I or shall I not tell George I went away with Mr. Ellis?" and the answer was always "No."

She saw that, although gradually gaining strength, her brother had still much of the nervous irritability to which weakness is liable, and she feared the effect of such a confession; besides, it would be a breach of faith toward Ellis. No: she might as well save herself the shame of such a disclosure.

It was a day or two before George was to leave town. He was busy at his writing in the dining-room, trying to get accustomed to the awkwardness of being one-handed; Marjory was pretending to read but furtively watching his progress. Mrs. Acland, as was usual in the afternoon, had gone out.

Marjory's thoughts had been oscillating between castle-building as regarded her life with George, and conjectures as to what Ellis could, would or might do when he found she had quitted Mrs. Carteret, when she was almost startled into a scream by the servant suddenly opening the door, and before she could well utter the words, "A gentleman for you, miss," Ellis walked in.

"You did not expect to see me, eh?" he said with a pleasant smile. "I was obliged to come over on a matter of business. I promised Mrs. Carteret to see you and report on your brother." Marjory murmured something about being glad, which her looks belied, and let him hold her hand for a minute while he scanned her face.

"I am glad to find you so far recovered," he said kindly, passing on to George and shaking hands with him. "I hear you

have been doing 'doughty deeds,' and trust you will ultimately be none the worse."

"An arm is a sad loss," said Marjory. "But I am thankful he was able to save his friend's life." She was very proud of her brother's prowess.

"Of course; it is a physical loss he will never recover; but I am told he has made a friend of a powerful and wealthy man, who will no doubt help him on."

"He is very kind and makes too much of what I have done. It amuses me to hear them all talking of my pluck and resolution," continued George with a boyish laugh. "I can tell you I was in a desperate funk. I would have given anything to run away, but when I saw the madman creeping over to attack Forbes, who did not see him, something that seemed not myself forced me to run between them. Then I thought it was all over with me."

"It would be well if fear oftener aped courage as successfully," said Ellis. "Now I am going to treat you unceremoniously. My mission to your sister is a secret; so I must ask you to leave us——"

"Oh! very well; I don't mind," returned George, rising with alacrity; "only remember Marge has promised to stay with *me*."

"I am not likely to forget." Gravely—"No, Marjory," as soon as they were alone. "My debt to you is increasing daily and the accumulation of unpaid interest will be enormous. You will be bankrupt, my sweet bride-elect. How do you intend to clear yourself?"

"I suppose I must become insolvent," returned Marjory, determined to keep a brave front to the foe, though shivering at his cold, mocking tone. She had George to fight for now as well as herself, and *he* should be neither disturbed nor deserted if she could help it.

"I do not think you are likely to be insolvent—at least your inventive resources seem tolerably large. Still it was imprudent and unwise of you to quit Paris without consulting or informing me. I might make matters difficult for you."

"Pray understand that I do not hold myself accountable to you, Mr. Ellis," she cried, half frightened at the violent beating of her own heart, yet resolving to bring him to reason if she could. "After all, I do not see how you could make things difficult to me without betraying more than you would like Uncle Carteret to know. What do you want me to do? Is it not right and natural that I should stay with my own brother?"

"And is it not natural that I should wish to keep my promised wife within my reach—where I can see her and endeavour to win her obdurate heart?"

"I cannot help thinking—or rather, feeling—that you don't love me a bit," said Marjory, nerving herself to a supreme effort and raising her clear, honest eyes to his. "I do not believe you

would trouble about me if it were not to revenge yourself. There is something gone from your voice, and the very touch of your hand, which used to make me think you loved me. For that I thank you," she went on, with a sweet humility that almost moved her hearer, "and now, though I behaved so badly, why don't you try to put away evil, unkind thoughts and forgive me heartily? You would be ever so much happier if you did. I know I should be better and happier if I could forgive Mrs. Acland; I am, when I can forget her. A strain of hatred through one's heart makes havoc of all harmony. Do forgive me!" With a sudden impulse she stretched out her hand to him.

Ellis made no movement to take it. He leant his elbow on the table near which he sat and covered his face with his hand.

"I will forgive you," he said after a moment's pause, "but only on my own terms. Our ideas respecting life and moral harmony do not agree. You have affronted, mortified, baffled me as no other man or woman ever has, and you shall pay me in full or——" He came across to where she sat and took her hand. Marjory started up, struck by the change in his expression. "Put your arms round my neck, lay your cheek against mine, and say, 'Dear Ralph, I will let myself love you; I will be your wife when you claim me.' If you do, I will forgive you. I will be weak enough—or forgiving enough—to lose my head about you again, for you are still the strongest passion of my life."

"But I cannot—I cannot," cried Marjory, turning very white and trying to draw away her hand. "I do not love you and I dare not marry you. I retract my promise. I never, never can be your wife."

"Then be careful how you indulge your emotions," said Ellis, still grasping her hand firmly. "If you will not have me for a lover you shall have no other. What man would care for a wife who left her father's house with another man, and left him next day *unwed*?"

"When I marry," cried Marjory, roused to indignation which carried her beyond fear, "it will be time enough to fulfil your chivalrous threat! I will never see or speak to you again if I can help it."

"Ay! if you can," returned Ellis in a low, harsh tone. Then, in spite of her struggles, he caught her in his arms and kissed her brow, her cheek, her lips. "There," he said, "is the first and last lover's kiss you will ever have from me. In future, remember I am a creditor, who will have his pound of flesh. I accept your renunciation."

The next moment Marjory was alone—shocked, stunned, unspeakably indignant, yet defiant. She was in too great a state of effervescence to feel fear or shed tears, but often, in after times when alone and depressed, the recollection of his words, his cruel

look at parting, came back to her and she shrunk from the picture presented by memory.

"I say, Marge, is he gone? What a pleasant voice he has, and what was it all about?" asked George, coming in almost directly.

"You don't suppose I will tell you the secrets confided to me," returned Marjory, endeavouring to speak gaily, and thankful she had so unobservant an interrogator.

"I fancied that rich aunt of yours might have sent you a handsome present as you are going to set up housekeeping."

"Oh! George, how can you be so greedy? Think how generous she has been already."

"Well, I know; but I suppose twenty or thirty pounds are not of much matter to her."

"Oh, such a sum matters to any one. I have left my best scissors in my room; I must fetch them," and she escaped him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"DANGEROUS GROUND."

"15, River Street,

"Dockborough,

"DEAR DICK,—

"It must be nearly a month since I last wrote to you, but do not fancy I have been either idle or negligent. On the contrary, I have been so busy I have not known which way to turn. Then I wanted to get a little used to my new life in order to describe it.

"To begin at the beginning. George had just got into these rooms when I joined him. Mrs. Rennie, at whose house, as you know, he had been staying, quite loaded him with kindness; besides the ordinary necessary furniture she put many pretty things in our new home, beautiful hot-house flowers and a basket of fruit and vegetables. They (Mr. and Mrs. Rennie) live about four miles out of the town, in a pretty country house, called Craigneish, after some place in Scotland. Mrs. Rennie is rather a fat, fair woman, who must have been very pretty. She is most good-natured—it seems a delight to her to do kind things; but she speaks oddly and puts her 'h's' in wrong places. Then she wears gorgeous gowns that would make Aunt Carteret's hair stand on end; but it is a shame to write all this of any one who has been so good. In short, she is a sort of rose without a thorn, and I always feel inclined to hug her, so does George.

"The rooms Mr. Rennie has given us are in the fourth storey of a great new house he built some years ago for his offices. They are rather low, but very pleasant; the furniture is simple, but fresh and pretty, and Mrs. Rennie put in a sofa for George to rest on when he is tired, which, I am sorry to say, he often is. By-

and-by, when we get over the cost of settling here, I shall hire a piano. The houses opposite are small and low and we can see over them to the river. I am never tired of looking at it. It is such a grand, broad highway for all the nations of the earth. And the crowds of shipping that go to and fro would astonish you. I did not think there was so much in the world. It makes one feel as if in touch with the ends of the earth to see the great steamers coming in and going out to America, India, China and Australia.

"Besides our nice rooms, I have the use of a dear little kitchen which I share with Mrs. Stokes: she is the caretaker, a Scotch woman, who had been nurse in Mr. Rennie's family, and married some *employé* of the firm, who died and left her unprovided for, so Mr. Rennie put her here: she speaks so funnily I do not always understand her. I *think* she could be disagreeable, but fortunately she was very fond of Forbes Rennie, and so is very friendly with George and me for his sake. A woman comes in every day to help in cleaning, and I pay her for doing our rooms too. I am learning fast to be a keen housekeeper. At any rate, I see how much thought it takes to get full value for a shilling. I go to market, and am beginning to be able to do a little cooking with Mrs. Stokes' help.

"As George is in the house he is able to take his dinner with me at one o'clock, and it is delightful getting everything ready and nice for him.

"Then, after tea, he lies down, and I read to him, or he reads to himself while I work, and there is nothing to disturb us; no one to dread, but sweetest freedom and a heavenly sense of safety, only for one horrid memory, but I will not name it. *You* know, and I often forget that. I never was so happy before. I am sure I am useful to George! He is far from strong and at times is a little fidgety. He was very nervous about his work as clerk at first, but I can see that as he gathers strength he is calmer and more self-reliant; still he is not so bright as he used to be. It would never do for him to be alone.

"There, you see how my old dream of 'keeping house for the boys' has been realized—but not quite. We want you so much, Dick. Fancy how nice it would be to have both my brothers to cater for. But you are better off as you are, and seem to be in society into the bargain.

"What grand neighbours yours must be. How do you feel when you hand a countess in to dinner? Pray write and tell me all about yourself. When shall we see you again? I hope Mr. Brand keeps well; give him my very kind regards. I like him so much.

"Good-bye, dear Dick,

"Always your affectionate

"MARJORY.

"P.S.—Perhaps you had better write to George next time; he likes to get a letter. I forgot to mention that Mr. Rennie has a daughter, a very pretty girl, like her mother; she wears *such* charming frocks! she is inclined to be great friends with me. There is an elder son, too, in the army. Mr. Rennie came up the day before yesterday to see how we were getting on. Is it not kind of him? I am so thankful to be here.

"M. D."

This epistle was eagerly read and re-read by its recipient, who had begun to feel depressed by Marjory's long silence. Indeed, his thoughts dwelt much upon her in his unemployed moments.

Her grief at poor George's untoward accident; her dread of Ellis; her readiness to give up all the advantages of residing with Mrs. Carteret in order to be her brother's companion and helper in comparative poverty and complete seclusion, were so many rivets to fasten his imagination—his heart—to the ever present picture of the bright if somewhat wayward girl who had been his tormentor.

To know that she was happy with George seemed to remove the only obstacle to his own hearty enjoyment of his life.

The winter had been a busy time—for Brand was unusually well and energetic—in the genial southern climate. Château Fleury stood in a bend of the hills, sheltered from the cold south-east winds which occasionally swept down from the neighbouring Alps. It was a quaint old house, neither large nor exteriorly picturesque. But an archway led into a court-yard (three sides enclosed by the dwelling and the fourth by some dilapidated stables), which in summer was a delight to the artistic eye of the owner. The walls were of a warm grey tone, as if they had absorbed the glow of southern sunshine, and draped at two of the angles with ivy. There was a parterre crowded with rose trees and ordinary sweet garden flowers, in the midst of which was a fountain, and at the top of a small mound in the centre was a hoary sun-dial. The windows which looked upon this pleasure were of all shapes and sizes, save on one side, where a small chapel was lighted by a row of mullioned windows.

The chief alteration to be effected was to pull down the stables and replace them by arches to support additional rooms, and thus to permit a beautiful view of the country and the mountains beyond to be visible from the court-yard. This, with necessary repairs and interior decorations, was the work in hand. Lord Beaulieu himself designed the arches and superincumbent edifice, and found young Cranston sufficiently intelligent and instructed to carry out the details. Brand spoke French fluently if not grammatically; and Dick, unhampered by knowledge of or regard for rules, rapidly picked up the language from the men he employed. In this he was assisted by a neighbour.

A couple of miles from the château, in a somewhat superior farm-house, lived a certain Baron de L'Épinard, an old manufacturer of Grenoble, who, having lost some money by the fluctuations of commerce, retired from business in a fright, and amused himself by what he termed amateur farming, but which was really market gardening. In spite of his assertions that he was a ruined man the inhabitants of the district asserted that he was still rich, and by the severest economy added yearly to his store. M. de L'Épinard had not bought his title nor assumed it at his own pleasure. He came of an old Provençal family, which had been reduced by its own extravagance and political changes to beggary.

When, therefore, its last scion worked his way up again, he revived the ancient honours of his race by the simple process of printing "Baron de Bellecour" on his cards and signing himself without his Christian name.

His retirement was soothed by the companionship of a widowed daughter, Madame la Comtesse d'Albeville—a fascinating young woman of eight or nine-and-twenty, who, on the strength of a pair of big, black eyes and a quantity of blue-black hair, posed as a beauty. She was touchingly devoted to her aged father, on whom her neighbours said she was entirely dependent, M. Le Comte having departed this life some three years before, "leaving not a wrack" behind.

These were the only neighbours above the rank of peasants of which Château Fleury could boast; and when it was found that "Milord" spoke French "well, but remarkably well," he was the object of much civility from the baron and his daughter.

Meeting him about with Brand, apparently on familiar terms, the hospitality of Bellecour was also offered to Lord Beaulieu's *employé*, who, in his turn, mentioned that young Cranston was his adopted son; so it came about that during the long dark winter's evenings our two friends were occasionally the guests of M. Le Baron. The devoted daughter, with winning grace, ventured to correct Dick's French, and further suggested that he should study the splendid literature of the country under her guidance. Dick very gratefully accepted, so on Sundays and Thursdays he walked over to Bellecour and spent a pleasant and profitable hour or two with Madame d'Albeville, who, as the days lengthened, occasionally met him half way, just for a little exercise, and they walked back.

The day he received Marjory's letter was a very busy one with Dick. He found that some of his directions had not been carried out, which necessitated undoing what had been done, and he felt obliged to watch the setting of every stone. Finally, when the workmen departed, he sent a polite note excusing himself to the countess.

He wanted to sit down quietly and answer Marjory's letter. He felt that he could cover pages. How she would enjoy Fleury

and the beautiful scenery around, the picturesque aspect of the country and the people.

"You are not going over to Bellecour this evening?" said Brand, as they sat by the fire after dinner. He had lit his cigarette, and laid the book he was going to read beside him, but in the meantime was scribbling figures in his memorandum-book.

"No; I want to answer Marjory's letter," and Dick set forth his blotting book.

"Hum!—I hope you sent an excuse to madame?"

"Of course."

"She will not be pleased."

"Oh! she won't mind."

"She is wonderfully kind."

"Yes," returned Dick shortly, as he dipped his pen in the ink.

"How do you get on with your studies, my boy?"

"Pretty well. I make a mess of it sometimes, but I am getting on. Madame d'Albeville reads beautifully, and is altogether very nice, you know; but she wastes time a good deal crying about her husband, who must have been, from what she says, rather a brute."

"I am afraid *you* are rather unsympathetic," said Brand drily.

"No, I am not; but it's uncommonly awkward when a woman whom you scarcely know begins to talk of her desolation and you see her great eyes shining through the tears that drop down after a bit on the book."

"I suppose it is," said Brand in a peculiar tone. "I suppose you are not handy at offering comfort?"

"Me? No; I never know what to say, even if she understood English, and certainly not in French. Why, she seemed so broken-hearted last Sunday that I felt obliged to say or do something; so I just thought I would press her hand."

"Had that very strong measure the desired effect?"

"I don't know. She was not angry, anyhow. She smiled and said something about the consolations of tender and sympathetic friendship, and begged me to confide the history of my life to her. I quite understood that much, and I managed to say I had none to tell, but hoped for a busy, full life in the future."

Brand laughed quietly to himself: "And after this touching passage you fail to attend for your next lesson; she will think you ungallant."

Dick laughed. "I don't want her to think me rude; but you see I want to answer Marjory's letter—which, of course, I prefer doing."

"The letter you had to-day? That's quick work."

"They will not think it too quick." Brand did not reply. He went on scribbling figures, and Dick was soon deep in his letter. By-and-by Brand leaned back in his chair and seemed cogitating some question. Then his eyes turned on his companion, whom

he watched for some minutes, a soft, sad and kindly expression stealing into his eyes.

"Why, you are inflicting a volume on Miss Marjory."

"It is to George; but it is all the same."

"Oh! indeed. Well, look here. I have been making a little calculation. Do you know, we have been living here at a remarkably cheap rate. Old Joséphine is a capital cook, and, like most good cooks, is a good manager. We have about six weeks or two months longer in this nice old place. These French workmen are very slow, or, rather, very intermittent. Now, when all is finished, I propose we take a trip into Italy and have a peep at Florence and Genoa. You have made some savings, I suppose, and you could not spend them better. What's deficient I'll make up, for I am not quite dependent on what I earn."

"You are too good to me," cried Dick, enchanted with the idea. "I often wonder why it is you have taken to me so much, a man so inferior to you in knowledge and—and ability."

"Not in ability, I suspect," returned Brand in a low, unsteady voice. "Perhaps some day I will tell you all I know. Meantime you like my project?"

"Like it! Why it is beyond my highest hopes."

"We must make the most of our time and study the great buildings. I wish we could manage Venice, but I am afraid. I knew Italy years ago and I think I can contrive to do our little tour cheaply. But we have plenty of time to lay our plans. Now I will let you finish your letter. It won't break your heart to leave your charming instructress."

"To leave Madame d'Albeville? No! certainly not. Why should I?"

So it came about that it was some time before Dick and his faithful friends in Dockborough met again.

* * * *

Lives unmarked by events roll swiftly. The first five or six months of Marjory's existence at Dockborough were peacefully monotonous yet never dull. It required a good deal of thoughtful management to keep within the limits of her scanty means, but she accomplished it.

Mrs. Rennie was always helpful, and used to come panting and smiling, after her ascent of the long stair, to bring the produce of her dairy and hen-house to her young *protégés*, to inspect her neatly-kept sitting-room and praise her good management. Then there were tea-drinkings, when Mary Rennie came in for shopping purposes, and partook of that refreshment with Marjory, who had never since she was at school known the pleasure of having a young girl friend. How fast their tongues went on these occasions! how their merry laughter rang through the rooms and even out into the passage, reaching the ears of Mrs. Stokes, who smiled in a sort of pitiful sympathy; and yet there were times

when Marjory grew grave and sad when, after Mary Rennie left, she washed up the tea-things and put them in their place.

If dear, honest, kindly Mrs. Rennie *knew*, would she allow her young carefully-guarded daughter to associate with a girl to whom such a story as hers was attached? For as time went on Marjory saw how almost impossible it would be to explain the peculiar circumstances which urged her to go with Ellis, how difficult to clear herself of suspicion. Over and over again she resolved that nothing should tempt her to marry; never could she confess her rash weakness to any man, nor would she deceive any one she loved. Having failed to confide the tale of her terrible mistake to George when they first met she never could bring herself to approach the subject.

There were, however, plenty of happy days when she quite forgot the existence of her enemy, as she considered Ellis, and enjoyed the companionship of her young friend heartily. So thoughtless and inconsequent a creature as Mary Rennie she had never met; a sound, warm heart preserved her from utter folly. She had been indulged in every fancy, yet not utterly spoiled because of the divine gift of sympathy. The number and variety of her dresses, her hats, her trinkets was a source of amazement and admiration to Marjory, while the wonderful manner in which Marjory turned, twisted and preserved her garments was equally a source of astonishment to the rich man's daughter; she would have liked to have bought pretty things for her friend, but though she rarely thought, her instinctive feeling was true and there was an independence about Marjory that forbade the offering of such gifts.

"What delightful brown bread and butter you have!" cried Miss Rennie one warm day towards the end of summer, as the two girls sat at tea in Marjory's room. "It never is so nice at home."

"That is because you are never so tired and hungry there. Everything seems excellent to me at Craigneish."

"I *am* dreadfully tired, certainly. They were so slow serving me at Macdougall's. It is a horrid shop, but my father insists on our going there because he is Scotch."

"If I had known you were going to shop I should have asked leave to come with you, for I have had a present from Aunt Carteret and am actually going to buy a new dress."

"Oh, that *is* nice. I will come in to-morrow and help you to choose it. Where does your aunt live?"

"Chiefly in Italy. She was in Switzerland when she wrote."

"What a pretty name Carteret is. Are they swell people?"

"I hardly know. Mr. Carteret (*he* is my great-uncle) had an old place—such a pretty old place—called Langford Priory, but he sold it."

"What a shame! If I had an old place nothing would induce me to sell it. I should like to have come of an old, old family,

with family relics, old armour and swords, and things hanging on my ancestral walls, and hiding places, and——”

“A family ghost or two,” added Marjory as Miss Rennie paused in her enumeration.

“Yes, *and* a ghost if necessary; now everything about *us* is so commonplace and new.”

“You have one possession that is most *un*-common, it is such a man for a father as yours.”

“Oh, yes; he is an old dear. I wouldn’t change him for all the armour and ghosts in England; and mother *too* is a dear, only she worries about my untidiness and idleness, though I believe she is right.” There was a short pause. “I believe I am going on a visit to my aunt,” resumed Miss Rennie, “and I do not fancy it much.”

“To Scotland?”

“Yes; she does not live in the Highlands or any nice place. They have a farm somewhere near Edinburgh.”

“I daresay you will enjoy yourself.”

“I wanted to go abroad. I have only been in Paris, but Alick (her eldest brother) is coming with me. I believe my cousin has very good shooting, so he wants to come too.”

“When do you expect him?”

“Next week. He will stay awhile with us. I am sure I don’t know how he will like staying with my aunt, for she and my cousins are regular farmers, make the butter and go to market; while Alick is rather a fine gentleman, quite different from any of the men you see here. Your brother speaks more like him than any one else. Your brother is so nice. Why does he never come up when I am here?”

“He would like to come, I am sure, but he is always busy then.”

“He is looking better, poor fellow. I wonder you can bear to see Forbes when you think he cost your brother his arm.”

“My dear Miss Rennie, I am only glad that George was able to save him.”

“Do call me Mary—do, *do*. I want to call you Marjory. Where is your other brother?”

“Dick? Oh, he has not written at all regularly of late, but when last I heard he was still at Fleury, in the south of France.”

“He is an architect, isn’t he?”

“He is trying to be one. He has had a delightful trip to Florence and Pisa; now he has gone back to do some more work at the château.”

“Won’t he come and see you?”

“I hope so; but I do not know when. He must go where he gets anything to do.”

“I should like to go to the south of France,” said Miss Rennie meditatively.

"It must be lovely—the scenery there I mean. I must show you two sketches of the place where Dick is at work."

She rose and brought over two water-colour drawings, carefully wrapped in silver paper. One was a charming sketch of the courtyard at Château Fleury, the other a fine view of woods and mountain.

"How beautiful—how exquisitely done! Did your brother paint them?"

"Ah, no; these are the work of a real artist who is decorating the interior of the castle. He is the greatest, the best friend Dick has. He kindly drew them for me. They are great treasures."

"I am sure they are."

"The carriage is ready, and the maister's waiting for you," said the caretaker, putting in her head.

"In a minute, nurse! I wish I could sketch. I learned drawing for years, and I wish you could see the things I produce. How proud mother would be if I could bring her back some pictures from Scotland! I believe the country round Aunt Morrison's place is rather pretty."

"Where does she live?" asked Marjory, her ear caught by the name.

"Near a place called Strath Logie. Do come and dine on Sunday when George is free. I will look in to-morrow. Good-bye."

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL ECHOES.

By MRS. HUMPHRY.

THE recently-devised plan of producing new plays at afternoon performances appears to be increasing in favour with authors and managers, notwithstanding the admitted fact that the verdict of a *matinée* audience carries little weight with it. It is much less critical than the regular evening assemblage of "first nighters," and, naturally enough, those who dread to taste the powder through the jam prefer submitting their plays to the less discriminating and more easily pleased. To call the practice "experimenting upon a vile body" might perhaps be considered rude, despite the classic origin of the expression, but the idea was evidently in some one's thoughts at a *matinée* last week, when he remarked that the new play was being "tried on the dog." The audiences that prophesy pleasant things are naturally preferred to the occasionally Cassandra-like utterances of the critics. The eccentric behaviour of the gods, too, on the first nights of new plays may have contributed to the establishment of the new order of things. It is odd to note the difference between an afternoon and an evening audience. The former seems to be almost a family party. Everybody knows everybody else, and there is much "visiting" between the occupants of stalls and private boxes. Critics are made much of by aspirants to dramatic fame, whereas in the evening they are grouped together and converse in whispers apart from the rest of the world. The evening audience is less eager, less animated, less demonstrative. They do not so freely weep, laugh, or applaud as do the "matineers," and, in fact, the outside public are better judges of true dramatic art than the ladies and gentlemen of "the" profession.

In the absence of the Kendals, "The Witch," after having been tried at a *matinée*, is now being played there by the company of the translator, Mr. C. Marsham Rae. Miss Sophie Eyre admirably impersonates the Lady Thalia; and Mrs. Marsham Rae, as the Lady Alma, has considerably improved her performance since the "trial trip" of the *matinée*. Mr. Henry Neville's well-known hearty and vigorous style is thoroughly suited to the character of Sir Rupert.

"The Old Guard" at the Avenue Theatre promises fair to have a long and successful run. The music is bright and lively, and the plot not too fatiguingly intricate. Mr. Arthur Roberts is as

irresistibly funny as ever, and Miss Phyllis Broughton's delightful dancing is only equalled by her charming and spirited acting. But it is from a musical aspect that "The Old Guard" is chiefly to be commended. Miss Marion Edgcumbe's fine contralto voice and style of singing are deserving of the highest praise, whilst in Mr. Alec Marsh the theatre may be congratulated upon having secured the services of the most rising baritone of the day. His beautiful and highly-cultivated voice carries his audience by storm, and is as remarkable for its tenderness and finish of expression as for its unusual compass and power. Mr. Joseph Tapley sings pleasingly and effectively, and Miss Henriette Polak is a pretty little girl who conscientiously strives to sustain a part which is somewhat beyond her powers.

The revival of "Pinafore" at the Savoy must delight those who, from any cause, failed to see the opera before; and will be equally pleasing to those who did, giving them a chance to renew their acquaintance with an old friend. The nautical dresses have this time been intrusted to Redfern, our first nautical tailor, with the result that the costumes of "our sisters, our cousins and our aunts," who appear on the deck of H.M.S. Pinafore are well worth the study of the ladies among the audience. Who will not be glad to welcome back the midshipmite, poor Dick Deadeye, on the hidden pathos in whose character a whole essay might be written, and "Little Buttercup," to say nothing of those great guns, the Admiral and Captain of the Queen's Navee?

That "Dorothy" has reached and passed her four hundredth night is by no means a surprising circumstance, so pretty is the music, so bright are the dances, and so excellent the entire *mise-en-scène*. The piece appears to be as full of vitality as on the first night when it charmed a critical London audience.

Those who love a pathetic play must not omit to go to the Vaudeville and see Mr. Henry Jones' new and excellent play, "Heart of Hearts." The story is as sweet and wholesome as the plot is well-worked out and interesting. Mr. Thomas Thorne has shown his usual discrimination in selecting this successor to the popular "Sophia."

"The Arabian Nights" at the Globe Theatre is a translation of a comedy by Von Moser, the German dramatist, to whom we are indebted for the inimitable fun of the "Private Secretary." This circumstance gives some idea of the quality of the piece; and that its good points are done justice to is guaranteed by the fact that Mr. Penley, Mr. Hawtrey, and delightful Miss Lottie Venne play in it.

The Paris Hippodrome is again at Olympia, and the performance is much more interesting and amusing than it was last winter. The Arabs are especially clever, and Miss Jenny O'Brien performs some marvellous feats.

A very curious entertainment has recently been held at the Royal

Aquarium. This was no other than a champion shaving match, and it is reported that a deeply interested crowd watched the proceedings. The point of the whole lay in a "contest" between two barbers as to which should shave the larger number of persons in a given time. One wonders, not only at the interest manifested by the gazers, but at the remarkable fact that there were persons willing to be shaved at a phenomenally rapid rate, and in public. The most deliberate approach of a razor, even in the hand of a known and accustomed practitioner, can never, surely, be a pleasing thing. What if the man should have a sudden fit, or go mad without giving notice of his intention? Such a thought must have occurred even to the most matter-of-fact of men while they are being shaved. But to have the operation performed by a man in a tremendous hurry, and in all the excited fever of competition, must aggravate latent apprehension and bring well to the surface any lurking thought of possible disaster.

Some pretty new waltzes have been published in good time for the dancing season that is so rapidly approaching. Among these are "The Heliotrope" and "The Old Story," the former by H. Hawkins, and the latter by Marie Duprés.

The name of new songs is legion. A charming one is "Love will Recall," by J. B. Spawforth.

There is little doing just now, and little going on but rain. This is a dull time of year, and every one who can manage it keeps away from London in November and early December. The climate seems in a state of brooding misery, and few people possess the energy to rise superior to its sinister influences. There are days when our dreadful weather will not even let the fire burn bright upon the hearth, and when it seems to reduce the mind to a sort of sluggishness and the memory to a slough of despond. The atmosphere seems to have escaped from one of the circles in Dante's "Inferno," and it is always on such a day as this that some one writes and tells us of the bright sunshine, blue skies, soft airs and brilliant flowers in the favoured spots wherein they dwell. Is this a kind thing to do? Could Hate play us a much worse trick than these good friends?

LONDON SOCIETY.

CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

NEVILLE'S WAX-WORKS.

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER,

AUTHOR OF "BOOTLES' BABY," "GARRISON GOSSIP," "THAT IMP,"
"MIGNON'S HUSBAND," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THAT AUGUSTA.

"IF I don't find something to do to 'liven up this hole, I shall just go clean out of my mind," said one John Neville, in a tone of desperation to a comrade.

The other man looked up with a laugh. "Oh, come out and have a game of tennis, you restless beggar," he said, with good-natured contempt of the other's do-nothing wretchedness.

But John Neville did not move; on the contrary he stretched a pair of long arms up above his head as he lay back in a lounging chair, and a pair of longer legs out on the floor before him. "Tennis is a bore—I'm sick of tennis," he explained. "It's all very well—er—out and about, but here—well, it's a bore."

"H'm—no women to look on and applaud, that's about it, eh? Finest tennis-ground in England no compensation for them, eh?"

"It is a good ground," Neville admitted, in a grudging tone—"I don't find any fault with the ground—but I'm sick of tennis, it's so infernally dull."

"Let's go into Weymouth," suggested Fleming.

But Neville said nay to that too. "What's the good? There's not a decent looking woman, no, nor, hang it, a decently dressed woman to be found from one end of Weymouth to the other! By Jove, but though soldiers do get shoved into some queer sort of places, Weymouth's about the fag end of the choice. Why just now in the cream of the season, not a single smart woman to be seen for love or money—only a crowd of 'Arriets in yacht-caps—by Jove, not even 'andsome 'Arriets."

Fleming laughed out long and loudly at Neville's description of the throng at that time crowding the streets and promenades of the little watering-place, which was just then the social haven of the Royal Chalkshire Regiment of which he and Neville were officers.

It was true enough and he could not deny it, though fortunately for himself he possessed that blessed kind of disposition which can and does make itself tolerably comfortable under even the most disadvantageous circumstances.

"What on earth I can ever have done," Neville grumbled on, "that I should be stuck here in a hole like Portland for a whole year goes beyond me to imagine. 'Pon my soul, one's life here is scarcely a shade better than the poor devils of convicts themselves."

"It's healthy," suggested Fleming mildly.

"Oh, beastly healthy—one hasn't even the satisfaction of getting sick—leave now and again;" and then there came a knock at the door, and in obedience to Neville's loud "come in" his servant entered carrying a note.

"Ugh—'My dear Mr. Neville, will you come over to tennis next Tuesday afternoon,'" Neville remarked ungratefully, looking at the address and making no attempt to open the envelope. "Ten miles there and ten miles back and have to play with that Augusta all the time."

"What, are even the women beginning to pall?" cried Fleming.

"The Everard women? yes, very much so," retorted the other in disgust. "By Jove, it makes a fellow dizzy to think of the countless hosts of subalterns 'dear Augusta' and 'dear Hermione' have palled upon. I wonder now," he mused, holding the letter by one corner and using it as a fan—"I wonder if Mrs. Everard expects any of us to *marry* either one or t'other."

"It's not improbable," returned Fleming calmly, "and I've often thought a man might do worse. I don't mean exactly a subaltern, don't you know,—Augusta and Hermione have rather overstayed their market for anything under a field-officer—but there's the doctor, he's a jovial old soul and ten to one if he married Hermione she'd put on flesh directly, and I really don't know," he ended critically—"whether, given a couple of stones more flesh, Hermione wouldn't turn out quite a good-looking woman."

"*Never*," returned Neville, with an emphasis which set Fleming off laughing again.

"Well, never mind that—see whether it's Augusta's tennis or Hermione's music that is set out for your delectation, this time."

Thus bidden, John Neville opened the note—"It is neither," he said—"it's wax-works."

"Wax-works," repeated Fleming, "and for the love of heaven, which of 'em's going to do wax-works?"

"All of them," returned Neville, with a certain amount of awe in voice and face—"listen!"

"My dear Mr. Neville"—by-the-by, the italics were his, not Mrs. Everard's—"My girls"—GIRLS, Fleming, do you hear?—"My girls" have promised the dear Vicar to get up some wax-works to help the bazaar which will be held in the Vicarage grounds next month. As neither *Augusta* nor *Hermione* have had any experience in the arranging of exhibitions of this kind, and as you are so clever at all these sort of things, we made sure you would come to the rescue and help us out with our task.' You see," remarked the victim with grim irony, "how neatly she contrives to mix herself up with 'the girls'!"—then went on reading: "So, my dear Mr. Neville, will you come over and dine with us to-morrow quite in a friendly way, and we can talk over the whole thing. 7.30, as usual. Ever yours truly, Gwendoline Everard."

"Well?" asked Fleming, finding that John Neville was looking at him and evidently waiting for a remark of some kind.

"Well"—repeated Neville irritably—"and what the devil am I to do?"

"What should you do? You were just moaning about Portland being the most cruel hole an unfeeling Providence had ever cast you into—and here is a delightful change offered to you the very next minute."

"A delightful change," growled Neville; "well, any way, I'm not going to take the delightful change of dining quite in a friendly way with Mamma, and dear Augusta and dearest Hermione. Why, likely enough she'd hook me before I could get clear out of the house."

"Likely enough," returned Fleming, with a brutal lack of feeling; "don't see how you're to get off it, though; no use saying you're engaged; Mamma will know better than that."

But John Neville was pretty well versed in such small subterfuges as help a man out of a dinner engagement which he does not want to accept. "I've got a man dining with me to-morrow night here," he announced, "so that I couldn't go if I wanted ever so much."

"Who's the man?" enquired Fleming with interest.

"I don't know, I haven't asked him yet," returned Neville coolly; "but I suppose I shall have to go over there the next day and see about their blessed wax-works. The thing is—will you go with me? because I don't mean to go alone, not at any price."

"Oh, I'll go with you," said Fleming cheerfully; "I'm safe enough from their blandishments."

With a mind thus set at ease, John Neville replied to Mrs. Everard's note.

"I fear," he said, "that you over-rate my accomplishments; but if I am here when the wax-works come off, I shall be charmed to give you any help in my power. I am very sorry that I have a

man dining here to-morrow evening, so that it is impossible for me to accept your kind invitation. But I will come over in the afternoon of the next day, and take my chance of finding you at home."

"I think," said John Neville, when he had read this production to Fleming, "that that takes me out of the difficulty very neatly."

"I believe I'm on duty the day after to-morrow," said Fleming maliciously.

"Oh, no, you're not. And if you are I'll get Towser to go with me," answered John Neville with a laugh.

CHAPTER II.

DEAR HERMIONE.

ABOUT four o'clock on the afternoon of the day following that on which Neville had been invited to dine at the Everards', the two friends drove in Neville's little Battlesden car to the house occupied by those interesting and enterprising ladies.

It was not as Neville had growled to his friend "a good ten miles" from Portland, but was, in fact, just half that distance, being about a mile from Weymouth on the Dorchester road. It was a pretty place, ivy-covered and creeper-wreathed, with a pretty garden and tennis ground on one side and on the other was skirted by a hedge which divided the back premises from a neighbour's paddock. It looked a much larger place than it really was, for the house had been added to several times and each addition had been made in the most irregular fashion possible.

As a matter of fact, Fleming never found himself within the doors of Jesmond Cottage without thinking what a cosy and pretty little place it was; he thought so that afternoon as he passed through the low-ceiled square entrance hall with its tasteful arrangements of Zulu shields and assegais and its array of tennis rackets and Nankin plates.

John Neville, on the contrary, gave a disgusted sniff as his eye fell upon a tall drain-pipe which stood in one corner holding a fine collection of bulrushes and plume thistles. All the same, it was, perhaps, not the drain-pipe which was the cause of that sniff, nor yet the bulrushes and plume thistles which stood in it, but rather a bold painting in oils of marsh-mallows which adorned its red side; yes, that was it. The drain-pipe, innocent thing, had been made by the hands of a workman who had no matrimonial designs on John Neville of the Royal Chalkshire Regiment, and against the bulrushes and plume thistles he had certainly no grudge; but the marsh-mallows were the work of dear Augusta, and Augusta and all her works were to John Neville very much what the proverbial red rag is to a bull.

The neat maid had told them that Mrs. Everard was at home, and when the two men went into the drawing-room with its two big bow-windows and its pretty dainty coverings, they found Mrs. Everard and dear Augusta, engaged each in some light and elegant occupation and evidently awaiting them.

Mrs. Everard was a handsome old lady and, as one subaltern was wont to declare after another, if her two daughters had but been like her she might have dwelt in Jesmond Cottage in peace, and troubled herself about nothing but her dinner. She was plump and rosy and smiling, a little specious perhaps—what the men up at the Verne in moments of exasperation were apt to call greasy—but still always anxious and willing to make herself pleasant to everybody.

On that occasion she rose from her chair and sailed across the room to welcome the two young men with an air which was an embrace in itself. “So glad to see you—how good of you to come over so soon; and you, too, Mr. Fleming, are *you* going to help us?” in a tone as if she would as soon have had expectation of the Cham of Tartary suddenly coming to offer his services in the good cause of wax-works as himself. “How kind of you; come and sit near the window. I am sure you must be tired with your *long* drive.”

By this time Augusta had put down her elegant occupation, and came forward to greet the visitors. She did so with an air of finished coquetry which sat very oddly on her gaunt and withered person, and which, while it nearly sent Fleming off into a fit of laughter, had the effect of nearly killing John Neville with unutterable disgust.

“How d’ye do,” she enquired, with careless familiarity and another coquettish look at Neville. “You’ll find us all quite mad with wax-works on the brain. I tell Hermie that she only wants a few straws in her hair to be as like Ophelia as Ellen Terry.”

The remark acted just contrariwise on the two men. Fleming nearly doubled up with a strange internal convulsion, and a-down John Neville’s back there crept a chill.

Hermione Everard—OPHELIA—ELLEN TERRY!!!

He was too disgusted to speak! Instead he turned to Mrs. Everard, after limply touching Augusta’s effusive hand, and found himself a chair near her. She began about the all-important wax-works at once, and whilst he was giving her that polite attention which good manners demanded, the door opened and Hermione entered.

Now Hermione Everard was the gay young kitten of the family, a small thing with soft fluffy yellow hair and sharp little features like a terrier, with a certain downy bloom upon her cheeks such as at a little distance gave her an appearance of youth, though, when you came near to her, you saw that it was not the face of a girl but of a middle-aged woman. Still Hermione had always been the gay kittenish young thing in her girlhood, and she

clung to the kittenish ways yet, just as every now and again one meets with an elderly lady, who, in her youth was a beauty and wore ringlets on either side of her pretty cheeks; she would be a great deal prettier and would look many a year younger if she would wear her now less luxuriant hair like ordinary folk, but no, she was a beauty when curls were in and she sticks to them still.

I think Shakespeare was right—and by-the-by he knew a good deal that same gentleman—when he said “Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good,” and right hard does it seem to be able to lay aside the little airs and conceits which become youthful beauty well enough. I knew not long ago a beautiful woman, one who had lived out of the world for many a year, who was suddenly bidden to a garden fête in high places, whither it was expedient that she should go. She had been a beauty when *real* lace veils were worn, set round a poke sort of bonnet and thrown negligently to one side—you may see the exact pattern in Leech's pictures about the end of the forties and the beginning of the fifties, and believe me that woman who had been a beauty and was handsome still, went to that garden fête in a white gown with trails of autumn leaves all over it and she had a *real* white lace veil set round her bonnet and thrown gracefully to one side. Oh! lost youth, lost youth, what a loss it is--no other loss seems so deeply to touch woman's heart! She was a beautiful woman still, but she looked like a beautiful woman who had been buried for thirty years and but just dug up again!

It was very much the same with Hermione Everard. She had been a gay and sprightly little soul at eighteen and she was still a gay and sprightly little soul at eight-and-thirty, which was a mistake. She came in then with a run and shut the door with a little bang, danced up to Fleming in a breathless disjoined fashion, and put out both her little hands to him.

“Oh! How sweet and lovely of you to come—We are in such a state—We never had to do with any wax-works in our *lives*! And you know I never could stop still, not for a minute, and I am bound to laugh. Gussie will be very much more useful than I. She's so much more commanding and all that, you know. I remember three years ago when the 200th were here, we had a fancy ball in the town, and Gussie went as Mary, Queen of Scots, and awfully well she looked.”

Again that inward convulsion seized Fleming, and he had to bring all his self-control into play to keep the signs of it out of his face.

“And what did you go as, Miss Hermione?” he asked when he could manage to speak.

“Oh! I went as ‘Airy fairy Lilian’—out of Tennyson, you know,” she replied, picking up a small Persian kitten which was lying asleep on a cushion and making a baby of it—and an idiot

of herself, John Neville said in disgust to himself and aloud to Fleming afterwards—"and mother went as a Spanish lady."

"A very useful dress for a chaperon," put in Mrs. Everard with an air of indulgence towards her little daughter's kittenish ways, which offended John Neville's sense of niceness as much as the kittenish ways had done.

"Have you thought of anything particular to do," he asked, in a loud and passionless voice, of the fair Augusta.

"Oh! we have thought out no end of scenes," returned Augusta readily. "We thought we might manage to have a set of six tableaux and the conventional wax-works at the end; Mrs. Jarley and all that, you know."

"And who is to do Mrs. Jarley?" Neville asked.

"Well, we thought you would be the best for that," Augusta admitted.

"Really? I'm to be Mrs. Jarley," said John Neville grimly. "I'm to be Mrs. Jarley, eh, Fleming?" and then, as Fleming laughed outright, the Devil entered into John Neville's mind, and for a time dwelt there.

CHAPTER III.

NURSERY RHYMES.

DURING the next week or two the preparations for the wax-works went gaily on, much more gaily than might have been expected from the grudging way in which John Neville entered into the scheme for drawing money out of the pockets of the charitable.

He had had some hope of a few days' leave about the time that the bazaar would be open, but he never applied for it or thought of doing so, and instead, day after day, he was to be seen spinning along the road in his little car between the Verne and Jesmond Cottage, and his infectious gaiety concerning the forthcoming wax-works was such that all over the neighbourhood they came before many days to be known as "Neville's wax-works."

Fleming thought he had taken leave of his senses, but, in truth, it was the devil which had temporary possession of John Neville, mind, body, and estate.

He had found at first that "the girls" at Jesmond Cottage had had but very unformed ideas of the manner in which to carry out the arrangements for a public display of themselves (and other people) in the guise of wax-works. Augusta had fancied that Hermione would make a lovely Ophelia or a "Little Sea-maid" out of Hans Christian Andersen! And Hermione had suggested Mary, Queen of Scots' and the young Empress-Queen of Hungary as highly suitable characters for her sister to portray.

Augusta had dwelt with dreamy pleasure upon the idea of herself as the fair and frail Amy Robsart to John Neville's Leicester, or as the devoted Queen Eleanor sucking the poison from the arm of her gallant spouse, also John Neville, though in kingly guise. And Hermione had had her erratic kittenish dream too! She had dreamt of playing Margaret to John Neville's Faust, and Lady Teazle in the screen scene to his Charles Surface! John Neville said, when these fond dreams were blushingly confided to him, "Ye Gods!"—but he said it to himself, of course; "I really don't think it would do to have serious things like those," he said, gravely. "You see, Miss Hermie"—yes, he had got to Miss Hermie—"it isn't *tableaux vivants* we are getting up—it's wax-works. And to have wax-works anything like popular, you must have them funny, what will make people laugh. Now if we were to do a whole set of nursery rhymes anything like well we shall get the same people over and over again."

Miss Hermione caught at the idea with avidity, for there was a delicious flavour of excessive juvenility about nursery rhymes, such as tickled her kittenish palate delightfully. "Nursery rhymes," she exclaimed, clapping her hands gaily; "oh! that would be fun—and so out of the common. But, tell me, Mr. Neville, what rhymes would you do?"

"There's 'Hey, diddle, diddle,'" began John Neville rather vaguely, "and 'Sing a song of sixpence'—but I'll get a book with them all in, and then we can pick them out to please ourselves."

Eventually they decided on six nursery rhymes, and the programme was drawn up as follows:

"The old woman who lived in a shoe." Scene from "Sing a Song of Sixpence." Scene from "Little Bo-Peep." "Little Jack Horner." Scene from "The Queen of Hearts." Scene from "Simple Simon."

To follow these was the miscellaneous collection of pieces lumped together under the heading of "Mrs. Jarley's Wax-works," and among them were these groups:

"Blue Beard and Fatima."

"Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup."

"The Swiss Peasant."

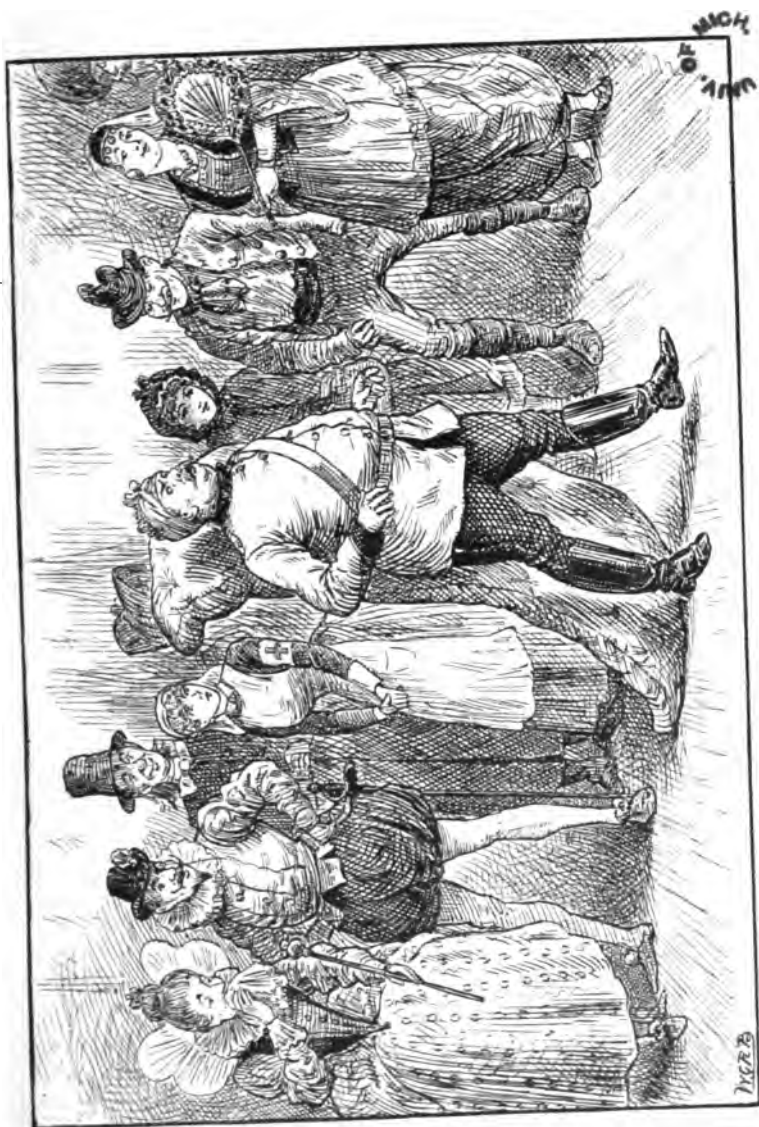
"Little Red Riding-Hood."

"Queen Elizabeth and Sir Walter Raleigh."

"The Captain of the 'Vulture.'"

"Group of Shakers," consisting of two persons; and "a most effective and elegant group of a wounded soldier, army surgeon in attendance and Red-cross Sister of Charity."

Now this last idea had emanated entirely from John Neville, who was, you will remember, to take the part of Mrs. Jarley; but on my conscience I do believe that it was not one which had



"The good Hermione did not laugh."

"NEVILLE'S WAX WORKS."

actually originated with him, but that it had been put into his mind by that enemy of mankind who had his abode within him during that time. For to the intense astonishment of everybody who knew him, he had persuaded the surgeon-major in charge of that district, a jovial old bachelor, devoted to whist and not unacquainted with the gout, not only to join in the ranks of the wax-workers, but actually to undertake the part of the wounded soldier, who would lie on his back on a hard wooden platform, with only a thin, a very thin mattress to keep his sixteen stones of tender flesh and blood from the hard boards; who would have to submit to have his head bandaged and his arm arranged to express severe wounds, to open his mouth at intervals and take imaginary nourishment out of an empty spoon, to roll his eyes and move his head to and fro, and generally, as John Neville put it, make a consummate ass of himself.

The question of the hour, among those who knew the fact, was—"How did he do it?" But if John Neville had tried to tell any one how he had got Dr. Farren to do it, he would have found himself with a difficult task, for he did not know—he only knew that, in what he supposed to be a weak moment, the doctor had promised, and that he meant to keep him to his word.

CHAPTER IV.

STERNE'S STARLING.

THE great day had come at last, and the first performance of the waxworks was in full swing.

It happened that the schools adjoined the Vicarage grounds, so the wax-works were given in the largest of the rooms, all the seats for several performances having been bought up several days previously. And at this, the first, all the rank and fashion of the neighbourhood were present, watching with interest and applauding with a genuine enthusiasm such as left no doubt of the success of the entertainment.

On the whole "the girls" from Jesmond Cottage took a very fair share in the display—Augusta, as "the old woman who lived in a shoe," birched several children in an exceedingly wooden and jointed fashion. Hermione, as "the Queen was in the parlour," ate bread and honey with much the same studied grace; she also, as Bo-Peep, waved a crook to and fro with one hand, and carried her apron stiffly to her eyes with the other—while Augusta, as the Queen of Hearts, rolled paste until such of the company as knew what cooking was, laughed heartily to think a knave could be so silly as to believe the tarts to be made of it could be worth stealing.

And then Mrs. Jarley herself stepped forward, and the work of

arranging the final scene began. That energetic old lady was but a few minutes in putting the principal figures into place. Each was brought in by two stout men and trundled into his or her proper position. Blue Beard stood at one end of the group facing Fatima, who gazed before her with the unmeaning stare of—of wax. The Swiss Peasant came just behind Fatima, and good Queen Bess and Sir Walter Raleigh were put at the other end of the platform. Close to them came Red Riding-Hood and the Captain of the "Vulture," and on a low chair in front of them sat Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, with a baby on one arm and a bottle in the other hand. In the background of the middle of the space thus left were put the two Shakers, and on the floor at their feet was arranged the group of which Dr. Farren was the central figure.

It was on this group that all eyes were fixed from the moment the Doctor was trundled in, until Mrs. Jarley was ready to begin her explanations and the work of screwing up the figures began; and surely, never did a more miserable-looking patient have surgeon and Sister attending him than this poor old wounded soldier, for he lay on his thin mattress looking the picture of abject wretchedness, which he was, with Fleming as the surgeon feeling his pulse and Hermione kneeling beside him with a spoon in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, with one of which she was to feed him at intervals and with the other she was to wipe his clammy brow, or as much of it as was visible below the bandages.

Mrs. Jarley began: "Ladies and gentlemen, I am now going to show you my collection of wax-works, unrivalled in the world's history. James, wind up the figures; Blue Beard first. You have all heard of Blue Beard, ladies and gentlemen, and all the 'orrid deeds he perpetrated? That's a long time ago, and he is now a re-formed character——" Here Blue Beard, by three jerks of his head, bowed to his spouse, who shook her head from side to side in an aggravating sort of way, which would have driven the old autocrat into a frenzy. "You see, ladies and gentlemen, Blue Beard's asking a favour of Fatima and Fatima says, 'No, she won't 'ave it at any price, and so he need say no more about it.'"

So Mrs. Jarley, otherwise John Neville, wandered on through the story of Blue Beard, through the antics of the Swiss Peasant and over the old tale of Little Red Riding-Hood, into a long yarn about the Shakers and their interesting and singular ways, and then touching upon the history of the buccaneer Captain of the "Vulture" and the pretty story of gallant Sir Walter laying his cloak over a puddle that the termagant Bess might not soil her shoe. This brought him to Mrs. Winslow, and he entered upon a long dissertation on soothing syrups and babies in general, while all the time the stout old doctor was lying in an agony of cramp,

brought on by his unaccustomed position and his exceedingly hard couch.

But the worst enemy, cramp or otherwise, comes to an end in this life, and so did the period of waiting for this group. "The finest group in my 'ole collection, ladies and gentlemen," remarked Mrs. Jarley, pointing to the unfortunate doctor with a stick, "is this group, consisting of a wounded soldier just carried out of battle, being tended with loving care by a doctor and a Sister of the Red Cross. See how he rolls his 'ead——" Here the doctor, according to instructions, rolled his head and also his eyes in a fine frenzy of simulated pain. As a matter of fact, he would like to have d——d out loud as well; but he was an honourable old fellow and having borne so much, determined to bear it out to the bitter end. "The surgeon feels his pulse and the Sister tenderly wipes 'is clammy brow." At this point the good Hermione came in to play with the handkerchief. "He rolls 'is head again, the Sister feeds him with the spoon, and the surgeon feels his pulse once more. Ladies and gentlemen, with this affecting scene our performance comes to an end, and as the wax-works resume their natural movements I hope you will think fit to give them such applause as you think they deserve."

The moment of the doctor's deliverance had come, and at a given signal the wax-works stepped from their places and formed in a line along the back of the platform. Hermione sprang up from her knees with a hop, skip, and a jump of which a woman of her years might well be proud. Only the unfortunate doctor still lay on his mattress—for he was unable to rise, and lay on his broad back as helpless as a turtle in the sun or a sheep in a ditch.

"I can't get up; help me," he yelled.

Hermione flew back and tugged with all her diminutive might and main to help him to rise to his feet. But what was the good of so little against so much? Just nothing. And I regret to say that not one other soul in all that large company lifted so much as a finger to aid him, for every one was so convulsed with laughter that they were simply powerless, as powerless as Dr. Farren, who, though he did not know it, was stuck fast to the floor and to the mattress by means of a double layer of cobbler's wax, of which the devil—or John Neville, as you please—had not been sparing in quantity.

"I can't get up," he shrieked; "I'm stuck!"

"*Sterne's Sturling*, 'I can't get out,'" cried a voice from the body of the room, at which a fresh burst of laughter rose up, such as made the very rafters ring, while the doctor struggled more fiercely than ever against his invisible enemy.

I believe, indeed, that there were only two human beings who did not laugh in that large assembly, who saw no humour in the situation—Hermione and the wretched victim. As for Hermione, she

tugged and tugged at the helpless mass of fury on the floor as if her very life depended upon freeing him, and, at last, by a mighty effort he wrenched himself partly loose, and, rising, stalked out of sight with the mattress still sticking as firmly to his back as a shell sticks to a snail.

* * * * *

It was surprising to most people, even those who knew the old doctor the best, to find that he bore no malice for the trick which John Neville played upon him, and that he turned up the following evening and took his share in the performance of wax-works like a man! But every one knew, they said, that he was the dearest old boy in the world, and Miss Hermione wiped his clammy brow and fed him out of the empty spoon more tenderly than ever.

"It was a fine joke, I daresay, Miss Hermione," said the doctor to her, "though you and I seemed to be the only two who didn't thoroughly appreciate it. All the same, I did learn last night to appreciate something else——"

"Yes?" in a shy little whisper. I am compelled to use the word "little" properly to describe Hermione Everard, she was such a little thing in every way.

"You're the most sensible woman I ever knew in my life," said the doctor tenderly; "I don't know another that wouldn't have gone right into hysterics and made a complete fool of herself. Miss Hermione, I wish—I wish——"

Hermione gave a look upwards. "What do you wish, Dr. Farren?" she asked.

"I wish you'd marry me," said the doctor, getting it out plump.

And Hermione did marry him, and that was what came of Neville's wax-works!

THE BROTHER'S PORTION.

By ARTHUR GRIFFITHS,

AUTHOR OF "FAST AND LOOSE," "CHRONICLES OF NEWGATF," ETC.,

AND

W. W. FENN,

AUTHOR OF "BLIND MAN'S HOLIDAY."

CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL.

FANGFOSS ABBEY is a grim old mansion, standing apart and alone upon the dreary Yorkshire moors, always stern and wild in aspect. Its natural gloom was greatly intensified one dreary morning of a wet July by the down-drawn blinds and closed shutters, clearly showing that death had laid its hands on some one in the house.

The squire was dead—the old baronet, the twelfth Sir Christopher Cathennes, who had owned the abbey and its broad lands since Thomas Cromwell dispersed the goods of the Church. Had the Fangfoss estate consisted solely of the moor lands around, this gift would have been of little value to any one. But although the Benedictine monks chose to live thus exiled from the world on the bleak Yorkshire uplands, they were possessed of thousands of fertile acres at Burton Christopher, upon the distant wolds, rich farmsteads surrounded by many leagues of luscious pasturage, by woods umbrageous, and running forces which turned many a broad-wheeled mill before they joined the Ouse. All these were left by the churchmen to bailiffs and lay brothers. Now and again the prior headed a visitation to collect rents and examine into the state of the abbey lands, and then withdrew once more to his lonely cell among the hills.

Three centuries passed, yet the solitude of the situation of Fangfoss remained unchanged. It would have been difficult to find a more secluded country house of its size and pretension throughout the length and breadth of England. Except for its immediate surroundings, the building, with the outhouses of the home farm and one or two labourers' cottages, was absolutely isolated from the haunts of men. Some twenty miles of stony, precipitous road across a rugged mountain district intervened

between Fangfoss and the nearest town, Green Skipperton. There was not another house even within half that distance.

Fangfoss was therefore quite self-dependent, and well-nigh self-contained, killing its own meat, growing and grinding its own corn, baking its own bread, and brewing its own beer. The reigning baronet was like a feudal chieftain, feared and implicitly obeyed by all his retainers, stern, strict, somewhat imperious, yet just, and, by those who knew him thoroughly, beloved and esteemed.

A hushed silence pervaded the death-chamber—the great stately room which had once lodged a fugitive king, and in which every Cathennes, father and son, generation after generation, had given up the ghost and died.

It was the night before the funeral, the last night that the dead man was to remain in the home of his ancestors, and the widow with streaming eyes, accompanied by her eldest son, the new baronet, had come to pay a last fond farewell to the man she had loved so much in life.

"Ah! Kit," said Lady Cathennes in a tremulous voice, "would that Anselm were here with us now. It is hard to think that he will never rest his young eyes on this dear face again."

"Poor Anselm! It is terrible to think that he had no chance of setting himself right with father," answered young Sir Christopher.

"But there, there, dear mother," said the son, "you must not agitate yourself with these distressing thoughts. Come, let us end this heartbreaking scene."

Together, hand locked in hand, they approached the bier, and looked with tender, pitying eyes upon the upturned rigid features of the dead.

How marvellously they resembled each other—these two, mother and son—as they stood by the coffin!

Lady Cathennes came of a handsome race: the Vardons of Northumberland. Although past fifty she had worn wonderfully well; her tall upright figure had lost nothing of its elasticity and grace, time had dealt gently with her fair, fresh complexion, and had left no lines upon her face save those of sorrow, now dominant, whilst it was only the thin threads of silver in the rippling auburn that betrayed the possibility of her being the mother of the stalwart young man at her side.

Christopher Cathennes certainly took after his mother. He was not of great stature for a man, being scarcely up to her height. But he was of the same mould, and his loss of inches was more than compensated for by his compact sinewy frame and the broad, deep chest, betokening great muscular power. His small head, like his mother's, was poised nobly on his shoulders, and his bearing and carriage were as gallant and as proud as hers. In features the resemblance was still more strongly marked. Both had a

rather prominent aquiline nose, bright blue eyes and a firm mouth and chin, and although Kit Cathennes wore a slight silky moustache upon his upper lip, his complexion was clear and bright as a woman's.

The last sad adieux were paid ; each stooped in turn and softly kissed the stone-cold brow ; then Kit closed the coffin lid and drew his weeping mother gently away.

"Come, mother," he said, "it is better not to linger here. The parting must be, so let it be now."

"You are right, dear son, let us go," and taking his arm they walked towards the door. "We need not re-enter this room till all is over," she said ; "but to-morrow you must come with Mr. Baddeley to get the will."

"Is the will here then ?" asked the son.

"Yes ; it is deposited in that little strong box, let into the wall, where your dear father kept all papers of importance," and she pointed to a panelled corner close by which was an inlaid escritoire at which the late Sir Christopher often wrote and transacted business. "I put it in there," she added, "at his request, but a few hours before he breathed his last. Here is the key, on my chain."

By this time they had left the room, and having locked the door and taken the key, were proceeding down the grand old staircase in the centre of the abbey when they came suddenly upon some one who seemed at first sight to be evading recognition.

"Who's that ?" cried the young baronet.

"Beg your pardon, Sir Christopher," said the voice of Joseph Pippett the butler, as he emerged from behind a *portière* upon the landing, "I was not aware there was any one upstairs."

"What do you want up here ?" went on Christopher.

"Well, if I may say it, Sir Christopher, I had a desire, a very strong desire, to look once more upon my dear master's face. I know it will soon be shut out for ever from our sight. The men are here in the house now."

Lady Cathennes, who seemed touched by this show of feeling, was disposed to yield to the butler's request, but her son rather brusquely urged her on, and they left Mr. Pippett where he stood.

"That fellow and I never got on together," said Sir Christopher. "He was more Anselm's friend than mine from the time we were boys."

Dinner had been laid in the library, but it was only a melancholy meal. Neither Lady Cathennes nor Sir Christopher had much inclination to eat, but the dinner was brought to an abrupt conclusion by the sound of carriage-wheels on the drive, followed by a loud ringing of the deep-toned hall-bell.

"My lady, my lady, Sir Christopher," the butler cried, as he reappeared from the hall ; "Sir Christopher——"

"Well, go on, man—what's the matter?" inquired the master.

"Please, Sir Christopher, it's—it's——"

"Who, man, who?" asked the baronet.

"Mr.—Mr. Anselm, sir——" was the unfinished reply.

Mother and son both jumped to their feet. Next moment the door was thrown wide open, and ere a word could be spoken on either side Lady Cathennes clasped her younger son in her arms.

"My boy, my boy," she cried, "how thankful I am to see you. Where have you dropped from?"

"Well, not exactly from the clouds, mother," was the response, "although three weeks ago I little thought to be once again at the abbey. I was then on the other side of the Atlantic, but a telegram reached me from a staunch old friend, who told me of my father's mortal illness. The thought was terrible that he might die without forgiving me. So I hurried home post haste, and only landed in Liverpool last night. Here I am, but as I hear, alas! too late."

"Yes, Anselm," said Christopher, taking his brother's hand, "our dear father has been dead nearly a week. The funeral is fixed for to-morrow."

"Then, at least, I am not too late to see him once more."

Anselm wished them to take him at once upstairs, but Sir Christopher would not hear of Lady Cathennes re-entering the death chamber, nor did he like to leave her. So they gave Anselm the key of the room.

Within half-an-hour the prodigal had achieved part of his purpose in returning, and Anselm Cathennes stood alone by the side of his father's bier.

CHAPTER II.

THE WILL.

NEXT day by noon the funeral was over. The twelfth Sir Christopher Cathennes had been laid with his fathers in the burying-place attached to the Abbey Chapel. The ceremony had been impressive, although no great gathering of people had attended. In addition to the chief mourners, only a few relatives and connections from a distance and the retainers and servants of the abbey followed the corpse to its last resting-place. The service was performed by the so-called Cathennes chaplain, a Green Skipperton curate, who gave occasional ministrations at Fangfoss Abbey. After the rites of the Church were completed the members of the family near and remote collected together in the big banqueting-hall, once the refectory of the abbey, where Mr. Baddeley, the family solicitor, was to read the will aloud.

The lawyer was senior partner in an eminent firm at York, a little dried atom of a man with much pomposity of manner, con-

siderably assisted by his habit of snuff-taking, and he used a red bandanna handkerchief as big as the sail of a barge.

He took his seat at the small table prepared for him, and gravely proceeded to draw a ponderous parchment from the inevitable little blue bag at his side.

"Ah-m—this is the last will and testament," he began.

"Pardon me," Lady Cathennes cried, as she rose and crossed to speak to the little lawyer; "but I forgot. You did not know Sir Christopher made another will within a few days of his death."

The lawyer looked at her as if she had spoken in some unknown tongue, and she repeated her words, adding:

"I must send for it. It is all *en règle*. You must understand there was no time to consult you in the matter, so we sent specially to Green Skipperton for Mr. Odling."

Then turning to the eldest son she said, "Christopher, my dear, go with Mr. Baddeley and bring the will; you know where to find it—here is the key of the safe."

Lady Cathennes took up the chatelaine with its numerous trinkets, hanging by her side, and hastily disengaged a key from among the bunch.

The two gentlemen left the hall together and were some time absent, so long, indeed, that the assembled relatives began to wonder greatly at the delay. But their wonder passed into astonishment and surprise when Christopher rushed back into the room and said with some excitement:

"Mother, mother, we can find no will in the safe."

"No will!" exclaimed Lady Cathennes; "not in the safe! Impossible!"

"The safe has been tampered with," added little Mr. Baddeley, whose movements were slower and more dignified, and who was a good deal behind in the race down stairs.

"Yes, tampered with," repeated Christopher; "the door came open at once without our using the key. We felt that something must be wrong, and upon searching where you told us the document was not to be seen. There was nothing at all resembling a will."

"There can be no doubt that it has disappeared," said the lawyer; "that is if your ladyship is quite certain that the will was really there."

"I put it into the safe myself," replied Lady Cathennes, "and locked the iron door with the key which my dear husband retained till the day of his death. From that moment it has never left my chain."

"Your ladyship can have made no mistake, I suppose?" blandly suggested Mr. Baddeley. "Who were the witnesses to the will?"

"Mistake! oh, impossible!" cried the widow with some warmth. "Two of the servants, Joseph Pippett and another, witnessed it. You had better ask them if you do not believe me."

"Oh, Lady Cathennes," interposed Mr. Baddeley, "do not for one moment imagine that I doubt what you say, only——"

"I shall not be satisfied till I have been to search for the will myself," continued her ladyship; "you may have overlooked it, as there were very many papers in the safe."

She went upstairs, and was absent some time, returning at length to confirm the strange and indisputable fact that the will had disappeared.

"I am utterly perplexed," she said. "The will is certainly gone—has been removed. I might say stolen."

"But why? how? by whom?" asked the pertinaciously incredulous lawyer.

"How can I tell, Mr. Baddeley?" was the reply. "I can impute no motives—make no charges. I have not the slightest idea what was the nature of the will or what it contained. My dear husband made it almost secretly, without consulting me in the very least."

"Well, well," said Sir Christopher, in a tone calculated to end the discussion, "let us consider what should be done now."

"It is impossible to proceed further at present," remarked Mr. Baddeley, in an oracular and sententious tone—"a felony has no doubt been committed, but the evidence is quite incomplete. Further investigation must be instituted. I must see and consult with Mr. Odling, and we shall require your ladyship to make a deposition, as also the witnesses to the missing document."

He paused, and then, in answer to the mutely interrogative faces, added :

"For the present this meeting is adjourned."

Many weeks elapsed before the relatives again assembled in the hall of the abbey. In the interval the lawyers had been busy. The various facts had been verified : the due execution of the will, its deposit in the strong box by Lady Cathennes, and its mysterious disappearance. Counsel's opinion had been taken, and following it an application or friendly suit was made to the Probate Court, setting forth the magnitude of the Fangfoss estate and the manifest injury to property if administration were indefinitely postponed. It was also set forth that the natural heirs of the late Sir Christopher Cathennes were prepared to accept the existing will, with whatever dispositions it might contain. At length a rule was obtained that it should be admitted to probate, and, failing the production of the missing document, should be deemed fully binding in law.

It was late in August when the will originally produced by Mr. Baddeley was propounded at Fangfoss. We need not give the document at length. The preamble was as long-winded as Mr. Baddeley, and as monotonous as his voice; but presently he came to certain clauses which made his hearers prick up their ears.

The effect of these, stated in a few words, was to deprive the

head of the family of some six thousand a year and one of the richest portions of the Fangfoss estates, that known as Burton Christopher.

Several minor legacies followed to favourites, relatives, old servants and intimate friends, and Mr. Baddeley, clearing his throat, wound up the long reading by affirming that the will was good enough to carry millions of pounds.

"Unless any one here present," he added, "is disposed to contest it, which I certainly do not advise, we shall proceed to prove it in the usual way."

"I certainly should not dispute the terms of this will, even if I had not already agreed to abide by it," said Sir Christopher, rising from his seat and going over to his brother, whom he shook warmly by the hand. "Anselm, my boy, believe me I do not grudge you your good fortune in the least. This shall make no difference between us." And he meant it, for the brothers had always been excellent friends, although there were reasons why the contrary might have been the case.

Just as the eldest son Christopher took after his mother, so Anselm, the youngest, took after his father, whose especial pet he had invariably been. The baronet had always indulged him, and kept him by his side, giving way to his whims, and treating him much as a spoiled child. While Christopher had gone out into the great world Anselm had constantly remained at Fangfoss, having keepers and grooms for associates in default of lads of his own station. He was therefore extremely popular with all the servants and retainers, with whom he spent so much of his time, and he had acquired many of their tastes. The father never realized the folly of this method of education till it was too late to repair it. One day the proud old man learned to his infinite disgust that his pet boy Anselm had been entangled in a compromising intrigue with one of the stillroom maids. A stormy scene followed; high words were exchanged, ending in an open rupture, and Anselm, goaded by his father's upbraidings, left the house with the intention of going beyond the seas. The old baronet never recovered from this blow. Its effects were shown in the illness which soon afterwards attacked and carried him off. But he never relented or forgave his son. One of his last acts was to make a new will, revoking that which we have just heard read, and bequeathing everything, every penny, every inch of land, to his eldest son.

It was this will that was now missing, and the loss of it benefited Anselm Cathennes greatly, as we have seen.

CHAPTER III.

OVERTURES.

LIFE soon settled down to its old condition at Fangfoss. Anselm's restless, pleasure-seeking nature made him only too glad, as soon

as it was decent, to leave the place and betake himself to London, where he entered society in the new character of a young gentleman of independent estate. Sir Christopher, for his part, ascended the vacant throne and sought to replace the last baronet to the best of his ability. In all this he was cordially assisted by his mother, who from the first had shown a close and intimate interest in the management of Fangfoss.

Lady Cathennes was a woman in a thousand. Of untiring energy, of great physical strength, and a good walker, she had been known to perambulate the fields and moors surrounding the abbey for miles and miles in the day. But her favourite mode of getting about was in a low pony-chaise, drawn by a stout, cream-coloured cob, which was ridden by a boy postillion. This conveyance was known far and wide throughout the country side. Sometimes, as on market day, she went in it as far as Green Skipperton. At others, when she deemed it advisable to see how the shepherds tended their flocks, she forced her chariot up the merest tracks on the mountain side. Nothing deterred her from her daily drives: no weather, no obstacles, moral or physical. She was able, therefore, to give sound and substantial advice to the young heir. Sir Christopher consulted her on every point concerning the affairs of the estate.

Some seven or eight weeks after the funeral they were seated at their early breakfast in the great hall. The meal was nearly finished when the post-bag arrived from Green Skipperton. Sir Christopher, according to custom, unlocked it, and looking through the contents cried:

"Ah, that's right; here's a letter from Anselm. I'm glad he's written at last, if it's only to show he's not yet spoiled by London and its ways."

Breaking open the envelope he proceeded to read his brother's epistle. Suddenly his face lengthened, and he uttered a low ejaculation of surprise.

"My dear Kit, what is it?" asked Lady Cathennes.

"Well, mother, read that," he said, handing the letter across the table, while he went on with the perusal of a second which had been inclosed in it.

The letter which Lady Cathennes now eagerly scanned was to the following effect:

"DEAR KIT,—Villainy is not quite extinct in this world, that's clear. Here is news of the missing will. The scoundrels who stole it—for stolen it evidently was—expect to make a good thing out of me. But they will find themselves mightily mistaken. I need hardly tell you that, however much it might be to my advantage, I shall take no notice of their obliging offer. Burton Christopher would hardly compensate me for loss of self-respect."

Lady Cathennes having read thus far, held out her hand for the inclosure, which contained these words :

"This is to tell you, Master Anselm, that if you think the property of Burton Christopher is yours, you're all in the wrong. It is no more yours by right than it is Mother Shipton's at the Black Goat, Green Skipperton. Your father never meant you to have an inch of Fangfoss land, nor yet a bit of his brass. For he made a will just at the last, upsetting all he wrote before. We've got that will, and we mean to show it unless you're game to trade. What'll you give for it? We want a thousand couters, money down, and will tell you where to stake the swag. We promise to be quite mum if you do the handsome; if not, look out for squalls.

"You can say what you think in a letter, which you must bring yourself to Hammersmith Bridge, at one o'clock, three nights on, the seventh of September. Mind you're alone, and have no one waiting at the ends of the bridge, for we shall see them and won't deal. You stand in the middle of the bridge till some one passes and says, 'Good weather for watercresses.' Give him your answer.

"YOUR BEST FRIEND."

The perusal of these letters greatly agitated Lady Cathennes, but so slightly disturbed Sir Christopher that his mother was disposed to take him to task.

"You make very light of this, my dearest Kit," she said in a rather reproachful voice; "surely we should endeavour to find out who these villains are? Had we not better consult Major Bird and the Riding police?"

"I think, mother, there will be time enough for that," responded the baronet. "Anselm is quite right to take no notice of the appeal. You'll see the next application will be made to us."

"Do you really think so?" inquired her ladyship.

"I am quite certain of it," was the reply. "Wait till it comes: we can then, if necessary, call in Major Bird."

Sir Christopher's anticipation proved exactly correct. Within three weeks the morning mail-bag brought a letter in the same handwriting as that addressed to Anselm.

Thus it ran :

"SIR CHRISTOPHER,—You have suffered a great wrong. Your father's will which has been acted on has robbed you of half your lands. We've got the one that was lost, which will set you right, and you can have it if you pay for it. It's quite worth your while, and so we tell you. Our price is a thousand couters, paid on the nail in gold.

"Your answer must be slipped under the stone near the great

cairn on Hango Moorside, and there it must be left till we choose to take it away. It'll be no good your watching, for we sha'n't go for it till we know the course is clear. You'd best be straightforward, or you'll lose the chance of winning back six thousand a year."

"Very good of them, really," said Sir Christopher laughing; "as if I was ever anything but straightforward; and what if I did let the chance go by?"

"Surely, Kit, you can't mean that you'll let the matter drop?" interposed his mother.

"Why not?" he asked; "you know I agreed to abide by the other will. Besides, I really do not like to dispossess Anselm. I never grudged him his share of the estate, and it would be very rough on him to take it back now. Really, mother, I believe it will be best to take no action at all."

"Oh! don't say that, Kit," cried her ladyship. "Perhaps these ruffians, if disappointed, may send the will to Mr. Baddeley, or to some one else, and people might say that I had a hand in suppressing it."

"Mother, who would dare?" exclaimed the young man indignantly.

"I don't know," she answered; "but the world is so wicked. In any case, my dearest boy, I think our duty is plain. That will contains your dear father's last wishes, whatever they were, and we are bound to try and recover it from these men. It surely ought to be in our hands, not theirs."

Sir Christopher was silent for a time.

"I daresay you are right, mother," he said at length, "whether or not I am actually convinced," and he took her hand affectionately as he spoke. "I will surrender my opinion merely to do as you wish."

The outcome of this conversation was a brief letter declaring the baronet's readiness to treat, which was deposited by Sir Christopher himself in the hiding-place indicated. He rode up to Hango Moorside alone for the purpose, and dismounted by the cairn. Before regaining the saddle he swept the whole circuit of the wild and lonely hills with a pair of powerful field glasses, but could nowhere discover any sign of human life.

After an interval of a week the reply came. It was in the same handwriting as the two previous letters, and it unfolded the further plans and proposals of the will-snatchers.

"SIR CHRISTOPHER," said the letter, "for a lad brought up at his mother's apron strings you ain't such a ninny as we'd a'thought. You know which side of your bread the butter's on, and that's more than Anselm seems to do."

"But you sha'n't have the will for all that, not without you tumble to our conditions, and so we tell you plain. We don't

trust you farther nor we can see you, nor yet so far, and we won't have no dealings with you at all, which we mean to say not personally, so you need not think to come. We'll give up the will in exchange for the thousand sovereigns, hand to hand, but only to one person, and that person is madam, Lady Cathennes, your lady mother."

"To me!" ejaculated Lady Cathennes, who was standing by Kit as he read the letter aloud.

"Oh, but this is too monstrous, too preposterous," cried the baronet.

"Go on, dear," she put in, "finish the letter, at any rate."

"We know," continued the precious document, "how my lady travels over the estate. We've seen her cream-coloured cob and postillion more than once on the far side of Green Skipperton and over Hango Moorside, and up across Fangfoss Fells. My lady is stout and strong, and able to do a good stroke of work still for all her fifty years. If you want the will you must send her for it. She must come alone, in the pony-chaise, as far as the seventh milestone between Fangfoss and Hango Cross. There's a side path to the right which leads over the Fells to Carghill Force. My lady knows it and so do you. Madam must get out of the chaise at the milestone and leave the postillion with the cob on the main road, and must take to the track quite alone; but she'll find some company we expect in the bags of gold. For we mean her ladyship to carry up the coin with her own white hands—a bag of five hundred couters in each—a heavy load, perhaps, but not more than madam can manage if she has the pluck to do it.

"Carghill Force is just three miles from the Hango Cross milestone, but the track, as you know, ain't steep after the first bit, and at the last it is more than a mile downhill. Madam will find us waiting for her at the end of the track where it faces the waterfall. She must put the two bags on a boulder which is t'other side of the shingle; leave 'em there, and come towards the one of us whose mask is white. He'll have the will, and will give it up as soon as the other has counted the coin. My lady may trust us to act fair: we won't hurt a hair of her head so long as she acts fair by us."

"A precious document and a very cool request, upon my word," exclaimed Sir Christopher folding up the letter. "There, my mother, you've had your wish. We have made overtures; they have been met by these ridiculous and impossible conditions. Now we can let the matter drop."

"I do not think the conditions so impossible, my dear Kit," said Lady Cathennes, "I am the person most affected by them, and I am quite prepared to fulfil them."

"I will not hear of it, not for one moment," broke in her son; "you, dearest mother, exposed alone to the risk of insult and ill-usage from these desperate scoundrels!"

"They would not dare to touch me," said the stately widow with calm courage, "I have not the shadow of a fear."

"But then the toil, the long walk, weighted with all that gold," objected the young baronet.

"Whatever the risk or inconvenience, the will must be recovered. On that point I am quite determined."

And there for the moment the discussion ended.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONTRACT.

A FORTNIGHT later her ladyship's postillion-driven phaeton came round to the door as usual at three in the afternoon.

Of late she had been often accompanied by the new owner, her much-loved son, Christopher, but to-day Lady Cathennes was to take her afternoon drive alone. Just before starting she came twice to the phaeton, each time carrying in her hand a heavily-weighted bag, which she placed in the carriage box beneath her seat. They were canvas bags, obviously such as bankers use for specie, and such, in fact, they were. This was the day fixed for the surrender of the will, and Lady Cathennes was on her way with the ransom to fulfil the contract at Carghill Force.

"Whittock, drive along the Hango Moorside Road as far as the cross by the seventh milestone," she said to the little postillion. "Don't spare Ginger" (the cream cob) "I'm rather behind time."

Whittock, a servant lad of few inches, correctly attired in a black jacket and silver buttons, touched his hat, whipped up Ginger, and set off at a sharp trot.

The season was now the late autumn. Chill October had arrived with its falling leaves and dreary leaden skies. Although the stony roads of this mountainous district were fairly dry, the air was heavy with moisture which gave a deeper purple to the moorland distance, and a brighter hue to the ruddy leaves and golden lichen on the battered old boulders of bluish stone—the prevailing colour of Fangfoss granite—which plentifully bestrewed the roadside and the neighbouring uplands. It was an afternoon to superinduce melancholy—to deepen the sorrows of the troubled spirit and intensify regrets for the past.

The black figure of Lady Cathennes, as she sat erect in the phaeton, harmonized with the sentiments of the hour. She was of course in widow's weeds; the dress she wore was heavy in crape, and beneath the close-fitting bonnet was the conventional widow's cap. Her crape veil was down, but nevertheless it was easy to distinguish through it the aristocratic features, the somewhat pronounced aquiline nose and the firm, square chin.

She had evidently braced herself up to the enterprise before her. This was plain from her determined attitude in the carriage. She neither leant back nor lounged, but sat up straight, with her eyes fixed on the distant moors, her mind no doubt concentrated upon the arduous task she had before her when she should reach the lower levels.

Little Whittock pulled up as directed by the seventh milestone, near the Hango Cross.

"I shall be more than an hour probably. The cob might take cold, drive slowly back towards Fangfoss," said Lady Cathennes, as she dismounted from the phaeton, first taking the bags from the carriage box. "I may find you in that direction."

"Yes, m'lady," said the lad, a well-trained servant, who would have shown no surprise if her ladyship decided to change places with the postillion.

Lady Cathennes then lifted a bag in each hand, and, seeming to make quite light of her burden, stepped off briskly to breast the slope. The track was narrow, but clearly marked. It lay between boulders and gorse-bushes and heather; now up, now down; a toilsome, difficult foot-path, such as chance has made and kept up, without reference to gradients or intervening obstructions. Now it made a long detour to escape an overhanging bluff, now a brisk moorland streamlet dashed across the track, and a few slippery stepping-stones formed the only bridge. After the first mile the scene became more wild. The path, which so far had steadily led up the moor, now gained the entrance of a mountain glen, and continued along one side, with cliffs rising straight and sheer above it. It was a deep ravine really, which cleft the Hango Moorside in twain. Down below thundered the waters, flowing from Carghill Force, which lay at the far end of the glen, and was still nearly a mile away. The noise of the rushing torrent was the only sound in this lonely spot, except when a stone, detached by the passing footsteps of Lady Cathennes, rattled down the slope and sunk with much clamour into some deep pool below.

More than once Lady Cathennes halted to rest. To carry two bags full of sovereigns up hill three miles would have been no easy job for a practised bank-porter, and it might well tax a fragile woman's powers. But she paused only for a moment to take breath. There was no faltering in her footsteps when she again pressed forward; no languor in her air. That which she set herself to do she meant to execute, it was clear; unless, indeed, prevented by some new and more difficult trial.

In less than an hour she was approaching the end of the glen. Already the noise of the now near waterfall was added to the din of the stream; now, too, the path began to descend on its way to the small shingly platform facing the force, which was the appointed trysting-place. In another minute this was in sight

just below, and Lady Cathennes made one last halt as though to gather all her strength for the trying interview so near at hand.

Yes, there they were ; two men in fairly decent clothes, "dittos" which had seen better days. Both men wore masks—one a black, the other a white mask. The first man who was nearest the path-way had on a black mask, and he stood close by a ridge of rock or boulders, the far side of which were wet with the spray and water of the force. The man in the white mask was on the green turf which edged the shingle. These stations no doubt had been carefully planned, as the last-named man held the will. Lady Cathennes must cross the turf to receive it, and if any foul play were intended, the first man could intercept the retreat by the path. Neither spoke or made any motion as Lady Cathennes approached. Her ladyship said nothing either, but silently placing the two bags upon the rock, according to the instructions received, passed on to where stood the man in the white mask.

Arrived there, she faced him full and held out her hand. She had done her part of the contract, and now, naturally, she wanted the missing will. He raised his finger and pointed to his companion, who was already examining and roughly counting the contents of the bags. Presently this fellow nodded, and in an undertone muttered :

"All right ; it's the real stuff ; and I guess from the weight the right amount to within a pound or two."

Then he in the white mask slowly proceeded to take from an inner breast-pocket a bulky parchment, which he handed to Lady Cathennes. They were close together at this moment—in fact, only a short arm's length apart. Lady Cathennes received the will in her right hand, and at the same instant, without the slightest warning, knocked the man down with her left. It was a blow to have felled an ox : full and straight from the shoulder, delivered directly between the fellow's eyes—a blow worthy of any of the most renowned female athletes of any age.

This sudden and unexpected attack utterly unnerved the second ruffian for a moment. But recovering himself quickly, he rushed towards Lady Cathennes with an opprobrious epithet and a fierce oath. Before he had moved a yard, however, Lady Cathennes had whipped out a revolver and dropped him with a well-aimed shot in the leg.

Having thus disposed of the second assailant, who fell foaming with agony and rage, her ladyship turned to the first man, who was still insensible, and quietly taking a pair of handcuffs out of her pocket, proceeded to make him secure. She next directed her attention to her wounded adversary, and, poising the revolver in her hand, said firmly :

"If you attempt to move, I will put the next bullet through your head, mind."

With this she sat down on the rocks, and continued :

"Pheugh! now for a little rest. For choice I'd rather not fight in woman's clothes;" and removing the crape bonnet and widow's cap, displayed, shorn of its moustache, the handsome face of Sir Christopher Cathennes.

The plot had been well conceived, and was marvellously successful, as we have seen. At Sir Christopher's earnest entreaty Lady Cathennes had permitted him to take her place.

She had consented, but only on condition that all due precautions should be taken to insure assistance being at hand if required. Half an hour after the phaeton left Fangfoss with the disguised Lady Cathennes a brougham drove up to the abbey door. It contained a tall, grey-whiskered gentleman, who had called quite by accident, and who was no other than the well-known and much-dreaded Major Bird, the chief constable of the riding. The real Lady Cathennes, accompanied by Major Bird, entered the brougham, which was driven rapidly towards Hango Cross, and actually passed the returning phaeton on the road. At Hango Cross two mounted men, also quite by accident, of course, trotted up from the Fangfell Side, and proved to be two of the most trusted inspectors of Major Bird's force.

One of the constables, dismounting, gave his chief his horse and Major Bird, with the other man, rode rapidly up the slope.

In less than a quarter of an hour they reached the force, where we had left the young baronet recovering himself after his exciting struggle for the will.

But when the chief constable arrived, Sir Christopher was no longer there.

To the major's astonishment and dismay the place was entirely deserted, and the young baronet had disappeared.

CHAPTER V.

A PAINFUL SURPRISE.

WHEN Major Bird reached the scene of the meeting at the foot of Carghill Force and found it absolutely empty he was for the moment completely taken aback. The whole scheme by which the son should be substituted for his mother had been so secretly and carefully prepared that no fear of its miscarriage had crossed his brain. Lady Cathennes might be nervously anxious for the result, but the veteran police officer, who was fully informed of all the details of the plan, had felt morally certain that it would succeed. Now, when the last card had been played and retreat was impossible, failure, ignominious and probably disastrous, had supervened. So far from recovering the missing document, the young baronet had imperilled his own life, and matters were a thousand times worse than they were before.

This thought immediately forced itself upon the chief constable, and with it came the consciousness that he must at once decide what next should be done. There was no time to be lost. Every instant the miscreants who had met and obviously outwitted Sir Christopher were getting farther and farther beyond pursuit. That they had carried him off either dead or alive might fairly be surmised from what was visible around.

There were the unmistakable signs of a conflict. The smooth grass of the plateau before the waterfall was trampled down by many footmarks, here and there scraps of clothing lay about, and a spot by the water's edge was wet and red with the unquestionable stain of freshly-spilt blood.

Had they killed the unfortunate fellow outright? If so, would they encumber themselves with the body? Would they not have left it where it lay, rather than carry a load likely to retard their flight so seriously? On the other hand, they might have thought it wiser and safer to dispose of it by throwing it down some blind ravine higher up the fells, where it might lie till doomsday, or till mere chance betrayed a heap of mouldering bones below a crag or in the recesses of some lonely copse.

Major Bird took up and quickly weighed each supposition as it occurred to him. He was still somewhat in doubt, when he got a certain line from the inspector who had accompanied him, and who, leaving the horses to shift for themselves, had been closely examining the spot and its surroundings.

"He wasn't dead, sir, when he left this," said Inspector Foggin.

"Why do you say that?" inquired the chief.

"See here, sir," went on the man; "this tuft of hair, it's sandy red. Now, Sir Christopher's is pale yellow."

"Well?" said Major Bird.

"They might have pulled out some of his hair, but not of one another's," continued the inspector. "Sir Kit got that bunch off one of their nuts, and a fine handful it is, showing he'd some life in him still."

"It may have been his last convulsive struggle," suggested the chief.

"I don't think it, sir, considering I found it right up in the coppice there," urged Foggin, "and the fight was down here. He was struggling still when they were carrying him away. I am certain of that."

"Then you can make out which road they took?" said Major Bird.

"Not a doubt of it, sir. Here's the trail—blood, from the water's edge right across the grass, where it's all so trampled, up to where the wood begins. There you see it still, and there are the fresh broken twigs and the bits of stuff on the briars which caught at 'em as they went by—half a dozen of 'em, I should

think, at least," and the man pointed to the evidence in confirmation of his words.

"I believe you're right, Foggin. This is the road they took. Is there any path or track? Yes? You know which way it leads?" inquired the major whilst examining the traces of the flight.

"Right up the fells and by the Deepdene crags to Fangfoss quarries," was his man's reply.

"Do you know the road? Is it easy? Safe?" asked the major.

"I know every inch, sir; I am half a quarryman; 'taint easy, sir, nor just now is it likely to be very safe," said Mr. Foggin with a grim smile.

He was a strongly-knit, hard-featured man, with a face which might have been cut out of the quarry and coloured by the weather. He could afford to hint at danger, seeing that in his time he had done many doughty deeds in the pursuit and capture of his professional enemies.

"It might be a risk, perhaps," said the major musing, not that he would have hesitated to order Foggin, or to obey if immediate pursuit were necessary; "it's getting late, too."

"And there are the horses, sir," suggested the inspector, "not possible to ride, sir, up them crags."

"No," acquiesced the major, "and more than all, there's poor Lady Cathennes. She must have worked herself into a fever by this time—I must go back to her."

"I don't think you need, sir," said the man; "unless I'm much mistaken she's coming along this way, and Usselby (the other inspector) is with her."

It was so. Lady Cathennes was now within a few yards of them, and Major Bird, with a grave face, went forward to meet her.

"Lady Cathennes, I must implore you——" he began.

Her face blanched, the lips quivered, her eyes filled with tears, it seemed as if the poor mother must give way to a paroxysm of grief. But her grand nature supported her—now, if ever in this moment of supreme trial, she showed how great was her courage, how dauntless her heart.

"Go on, quickly; tell me at once everything—the worst—my boy—he is dead?—murdered?"

In spite of her brave efforts she could only bring herself to speak in such short ejaculations as these. Major Bird imparted all he knew in the briefest way.

"But surely you are pursuing these miscreants," she said. "You won't let them carry off my boy, my Kit, to be maltreated—murdered, perhaps—in those terrible quarries, without an attempt at rescue?"

"If I have not already sent on, it was because I was concerned for you, Lady Cathennes," said the major. "But now, if you feel

strong enough to stay here, at least till nightfall, Foggin and Usselby will give chase."

"Strong enough," was the response, "I could go too as far as the quarries—anywhere if I thought I could give help. But there, there—every word spoken is a second wasted. Let there be no more delay."

The inspectors made their horses fast, and, after a short whispered colloquy with their chief, disappeared into the thicket.

When they had gone Lady Cathennes seated herself on the very rock where the money bags had been deposited and hid her face in her hands. Major Bird busied himself in a further close examination of the scene of the supposed crime. He was no tyro at his work, and he knew that often enough criminals unconsciously leave behind them a clue which will inevitably lead to their detection. This time he was disappointed. Except the tuft of red hair which Inspector Foggin had discovered there were none of what the French call *pièces à conviction* to be picked up. But the lock of hair he carefully folded up in a bit of paper and consigned it to his pocket-book.

It was quite dark before the inspectors returned. Foggin made his report.

The trail was clearly marked all the way up the track which breasted the fells. There were footsteps deeply indented in the yielding marshy soil, proving that those who walked there were heavily laden. They had the prisoner to carry and the gold. Blood spots were also noticeable, till the track reached the end of the wood—then they ceased altogether.

"The wound bound up," thought the major, "or worse—the captive was dead."

After the wood the footsteps were the only indication. They all pointed towards the quarries, but as the ground got more and more hard and strong, and the track reached the edge of the moorland they were less easily recognized, and soon in the increasing darkness were entirely lost to view.

"It is clear they were making for the quarries," said Major Bird; "so far, well. And now, Lady Cathennes——"

She seemed so reluctant to move that he added:

"We really cannot remain here. We should gain nothing and might lose much. Come, let me give you my arm."

The inspectors remounted; one, having lighted his bull's-eye lantern, led the way back, then came Lady Cathennes and the chief constable, whilst the second inspector brought up the rear with the other horse. Thus, after a while, with some difficulty, they regained the main road. Here Major Bird issued a few instructions, short, sharp, but evidently well considered:

"Foggin, as you know this part best, ride smartly to the Blackton Station, turn out Sergeant Godby and send him with two constables to watch the far side of the quarry. No one is to be

allowed to pass from the quarry village. Take the other two men yourself and patrol from here to the force. You, too, see that no one passes out. That will do," and Foggin rode off.

"You, Usselby, hurry back to Green Skipperton, warn all the reserve men to turn out at 1 a.m., and bring them to this point a little before daybreak. You'll just do it in the time. I'll meet you and we'll draw the quarry village from end to end, and every inch within a couple of miles before breakfast."

Usselby saluted and was on the point of starting, when the major added:

"Stay, Lady Cathennes, perhaps you would like to send a message to your son."

"My son. Major Bird, surely you forget."

"I mean your second son. He is in London, I believe."

"Yes, yes; how good of you to suggest it," she cried.

"Usselby can telegraph from Green Skipperton," went on the major, as he took out his pocket-book and proceeded to write a few lines by the light of the inspector's bull's-eye, "and Anselm could start perhaps by the Scotch mail to-night. This would bring him to the abbey by mid-day to-morrow. Will this message do?"

"Come home at once, take to-night's mail. Most urgent. Post on from York. Will meet you at Green Skipperton."

"I have said nothing as to what has happened, you see. I have my reasons—I will tell you them by-and-by."

By this time they had reached the major's brougham, which, with its confidential coachman, one of the police-constables, was slowly driving up and down the road.

"Anything pass you on the road, Wilcox, since we left?" asked Major Bird.

"Nothing, sir," was the answer; "yes, yes, I beg your pardon, sir—there was a light tax cart passed more than an hour ago. One of the abbey carts, sir—brown, picked out with red, sir—I know the colour well—it was not quite dark when it passed, and I saw it plainly."

"No doubt Humphreys, the bailiff," interposed Lady Cathennes, "coming from Hango Moorside."

"Did you notice anything more, Wilcox?" asked the major.

"Not particular, sir; they went by pretty fast towards the abbey. There were two men in the cart, and they had a young calf with them."

"A calf—eh?" inquired the chief constable.

"Yes, sir, under the hay—it struggled awful, poor thing."

"Well, now, Wilcox," went on Major Bird, "drive her ladyship as far as the Hango gates of the park. You will be able, Lady Cathennes, to walk from there to the abbey?"

"Of course. But you are coming to the house, I hope," said she, "there is so much still to talk about and arrange."

"Oh yes! I propose to stay the night at the abbey, if you will let me," he responded, as he followed Lady Cathennes into the brougham. "I must make an early start in the morning, and Fangfoss is more than half way."

CHAPTER VI.

A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

MR. PIPPETT, the obsequious butler, opened the door when half an hour later Lady Cathennes with her companion rang the deep-toned bell at the entrance to Fangfoss Abbey.

"Mr. Pippett," said her ladyship, "Major Bird will dine here and sleep."

"Yes, m'lady."

"And Sir Christopher," she went on, though it almost choked her to speak so coolly, "will not return to-night."

"So I supposed, m'lady," said Pippett.

"How? What do you mean?"

Lady Cathennes started, and the chief constable stared.

"Why, m'lady," continued the butler, "beg pardon—I packed his bag yesterday with my own hands, and by his direction put up things enough for two or three days."

"To be sure, to be sure," exclaimed Lady Cathennes quickly, and nothing more was said.

Her ladyship sent an apology at the last moment, and Major Bird dined alone. It was not strange that the agitation of the day should prevent her from doing the honours as hostess. But she braced herself up to receive her guest afterwards in the drawing-room; she was indeed most eager to talk over the occurrences of this terrible day, and weigh the chances for and against her unfortunate son.

"Have no fear, dear Lady Cathennes," said the major; "beyond your own sickening anxiety and the unspeakable discomfort, I feel convinced nothing unpleasant will have happened to Sir Christopher. But it is essential that I should know everything, or we may miss an important clue, and the scoundrels who have perpetrated this villainy may escape their just reward. You must forgive my asking you one or two questions. First of all, do you think any of your servants know that Sir Christopher went to personate you?"

"It is scarcely possible. It was an absolute secret between my dear boy and myself," replied Lady Cathennes.

"Your maid—did she suspect nothing?" asked her friend.

"I sent her specially away that morning after I had dressed," answered Lady Cathennes, "by giving her leave to go and stay the day at Green Skipperton, at her aunt's. She left by 9.30; dear Kit did not come to my room to change until near twelve."

"And he lay *perdu* till then?" was the inquiry.

"Quite," said her ladyship; "you know he slept on a sofa in the dressing-room belonging to the King's Chamber, the room where my dearest husband died, and all that suite has been locked up ever since. I have the keys myself."

"Could any one have observed him re-entering the abbey?" was Major Bird's next question.

"I cannot imagine it," said the widow; "you are aware how carefully it was all contrived."

As the reader is not so well informed as the chief constable, it will be well to describe the manner in which Sir Christopher's disguise had been effected. To avoid arousing suspicion, he had the previous afternoon, as we have seen, ordered his bag to be packed, on the plea that he was going from home for a few days. He was then driven to Green Skipperton, where the groom from the abbey had seen the last of him. He had gone by train to York, where he dined and spent the evening. Leaving his bag at the Club, he made his way about nine p.m. to the great central station, and took a ticket for Syfax, a place rather farther from the abbey than Green Skipperton, and on the opposite side. Thence he walked by a cross-country road to the abbey, seventeen miles, doing the journey comfortably in a little over five hours. It was about three a.m. when he thus reached his home like a thief in the night and entered by a window door which opened into my lady's pleasaunce, a private and well-sheltered rose garden in the wing which Lady Cathennes herself occupied. In stockinged feet he crept noiselessly upstairs and gained the dressing-room, as already stated by his mother. The door had been unlocked by Lady Cathennes, whom he found waiting for him. She had provided supper, and herself made his bed; in the same way she waited for him next morning, and when the time came for assuming female garb, helped him to dress.

"It was cleverly done," said the major, "and yet I cannot help thinking that some inkling must have crept out somehow. My notion has always been that there is a traitor in the house—some servant, Lady Cathennes."

"Why are you so suspicious of the servants, Major Bird?" was the inquiry.

"One of them stole the will, I am firmly convinced," responded the major; "who else was there to go about the house?"

"On that dreadful night there were the undertaker's men," said the widow with a deep sigh.

"Yes; but they all came from York," went on the major. "None of them could have known where the will was."

"How should any one of the servants have known that?" questioned Lady Cathennes.

"They might have overheard, as they do many things," said Bird. "I think you yourself told me, Lady Cathennes, that you

found your butler on the stairs as you came away from the King's Chamber?"

"Oh, Pippett, to be sure," said her ladyship. "But he is so old and trusted a servant: no one could suspect him. And he always showed so much good feeling, he was so devoted to my dear husband, that there was every reason he should pay him a last tribute of respect. After all it was quite natural he should be near the room."

Something made Major Bird get up from his seat abruptly and go to the drawing-room door. There he found Pippett with coffee-pot and cups on a silver tray and about to enter the room.

Was this also quite natural? or had the butler been listening again?

Whatever Major Bird thought he made no remark to Lady Cathennes, but he resolved to put a watch on Joseph Pippett.

The same subject continued to occupy them for another half hour. At length Major Bird got up to retire, saying:

"I shall be on the move very early, Lady Cathennes. It will be better, though, to say nothing about that. I do not want your servants to know what I am at. My own man will call me and see me off. We ought to be at the quarry by half-past six, and by nine at latest I hope to have returned with the very best news."

The chief constable did not, however, get back till past ten. He was alone, and his face was sad and grave.

The police had searched every hovel in the village, every hole and hiding-place in the quarries. They had hunted through the neighbouring broken ground in the coppice and up and down the crags, but no trace of the missing baronet was to be found. If still alive, he was carefully concealed: if dead, his body must have been thrown where it might never be found.

Still, the search had not been altogether fruitless. In one of the quarry cottages they had come upon a quarryman with a bandaged leg, and the hurt on a closer inspection proved to be from a bullet wound. In another cottage they found a revolver, recognized later as Sir Christopher's, just as a medical examination pointed to the fact that the bullet which was extracted from the wounded man's leg was from the same pistol.

This fixed upon the villagers beyond question a certain complicity in the crime, but there was not sufficient evidence to make arrests. Major Bird was satisfied to quarter a strong detachment of police in the quarry, and post sentries on the two cottages in which these discoveries had been made.

The chief constable pondered deeply over the facts as they now presented themselves to him. What had become of the baronet? Major Bird was much disappointed at his failure in the quarry. But he was too good a police officer to be readily disheartened. Rebuff in one direction after all only meant the complete ex-

haustion of that line of inquiry. He must now try another, and for this it was necessary to hark back to the original point of departure.

He had tracked the baronet's captors with their burden through the coppice to the open land upon the fells. So far the scent was strong and certain. It was from this point conjecture commenced. The major had at first concluded that Sir Kit had been carried to the village, and had on this supposition closely watched all the issues from the quarry. But no one had passed out—unless his constables had neglected their duty, and as he had every confidence in them, this was hardly likely. Had the baronet been taken to the village the search at daylight ought to have discovered him.

What was the natural inference?

That somewhere near the point where the track suddenly ended, the party had divided. One lot had proceeded to the village with the wounded man, whom the police had found; then the others, with Sir Christopher, had turned off. But whither?

Theirs was clearly the trail to follow if any trail could be found. Were there really no indications?

Full of this idea the major summoned Inspector Foggin, who had first followed the footmarks, and proceeded to interrogate him.

"You are positive, Foggin," he said, "that there were no other signs of persons having passed?"

"Not of those persons, sir," replied the man.

"What do you mean?" inquired the chief.

"Not of the men who were carrying off the baronet, sir,—of that I am certain," said Foggin, "and I will tell you why. To the edge of the fell the footmarks were plain—they all pointed in the same direction—towards the quarry. The other marks——"

"Then there were other marks?" interposed the major.

"Yes, sir, of wheels and hoofs they were," continued the man, "along a moor path which crossed the others at about right angles."

"Recent?" was the query.

"I did not take very particular notice, sir," said Foggin. "The party, you see, sir, was unmistakably on foot."

"Up to that point, yes; but why should they not have had a vehicle waiting for them there?" again queried the major.

Inspector Foggin looked hard at his chief with something like a blush on his hard-featured face as he said:

"Odd rabbit it, sir, to think I should have been such a ninny! Why, of course," and in his anguish he hit the back of one hand a tremendous slap with the other.

"It's a new light, depend on it," said the major. "We must follow this out. Order your horse and mine, we'll ride up to the nearest point. A moor path, you say?"

"Yes, sir," was the answer, "one leading down to the main road and coming from Syfax side, as they all does."

Within a quarter of an hour Major Bird and his man had ridden off at a sharp trot. Half an hour brought them to the Hango cross roads. Here they pulled up to a walk and so proceeded steadily up the hill to the edge of the moor. Very soon they came upon a path debouching into the main road.

"This'll be it, sir, I expect."

"Dismount and examine carefully for any marks," said the chief constable.

In less than a minute the inspector's voice was heard, as he gleefully exclaimed:

"Here they are, sir, wheels and hoofs, coming this way. Let's follow them up, sir," and he went on up and across the moor with his nose to the ground, quickly, like a sleuthhound within scent of his quarry, the major riding behind and leading the other horse.

Presently they reached the spot where Foggin had left the trail the night before. He at once pointed out to his chief the footmarks and other signs on the waterfall or coppice side of the moor path. It was beyond the path where the ground was more strong that they were lost.

"You see I was right so far," he began.

"Yes, yes, Foggin," said the chief, "but what we are at now are the wheelmarks. Let's see how far back they go. Perhaps we may make out yet where they come from."

It was by this time a settled conviction with the chief constable that the baronet had been conveyed, somewhere, in the vehicle, the track of which was now under their eyes. This was another fact gained.

They now followed the moor path, but riding alongside it, not actually on it, so as not to interfere with the tracks. It presently developed into a sort of narrow cutting, the surface soft and spongy as though holding the water drained from the higher land above. Upon this marshy soil the wheelmarks and the hoofmarks continued to be plainly visible till they came to the very end of the path. This end was where it joined a farm road or lane, which Foggin said came straight from the abbey, leading thence to the moors and nowhere else.

"Then the wheels must have come from the abbey," said Major Bird.

"Through it or the Home Farm," added Foggin with conviction.

"Of course, and Wilcox said he was passed on the main road by one of the abbey tax-carts while we were all at the force," said Major Bird.

"Was he, sir? That's the first I've heard of it. Who was in the cart?" asked Foggin.

"He couldn't see for certain, but they had a calf with them,"

replied the major. "It was at the bottom of the cart, struggling under some hay."

"A calf, sir?"

With these words there were volumes in the look of interrogation the inspector gave his chief.

"Of course," acquiesced the latter; "now it is quite clear. That was Sir Christopher. But where were they taking him, and in an abbey cart?"

Major Bird, without waiting to hear the inspector's reply, pricked up his horse and trotted quickly back towards the abbey. He was in a deep meditation all the way, and only broke silence as he reached the gates of the park.

"Not a syllable of this to a soul, Foggin, even in the force," he said quite sternly. "We must work this out by ourselves."

CHAPTER VII.

PRIVATE INQUIRIES.

ARRIVED at the abbey, the chief constable was met by Anselm Cathennes, who heard the whole story from his mother directly he reached home.

"I have a fresh clue, Anselm," said the major briefly. "But I shall want your assistance. Can you find out quietly what vehicles left the stables yesterday?"

"The head coachman will know," replied young Cathennes.

"Not about the tax-carts? They are kept at the Home Farm, I suppose," suggested the major.

"Yes, that would be under Humphreys the bailiff. It's his business; shall I send for him?" asked Anselm.

"Let's go together and have a look at the carts. We needn't attract attention."

With these words Major Bird and Anselm walked over to the Home Farm, not a quarter of a mile distant, and went at once to the outhouse where the lighter vehicles were kept. There were three tax-carts in: all, Anselm thought, except one, which probably Humphreys was using.

A helper was lounging in the stable yard, and at Major Bird's suggestion Anselm sent him off on a message to the great house.

When they were alone Major Bird carefully scrutinized the tax-carts in turn. One had lost a lynch pin and had clearly not been driven for some time; the second if it had been out had been already well washed and cleaned; the third only bore signs of having been lately on the road. These signs were mud-encrusted wheels and dirt on the splashboard; signs which Major Bird examined curiously and with increasing interest.

"It's moorland mud: dark and inky these stains are; and here's a bit of heather stuck to one of the wheels," said the major.

"Anything peculiar in that?" asked Anselm.

"Well, following a certain line of argument, yes. But I must have more," and the major gently raised the shafts and peeped into the body of the cart.

"Ha!" he cried suddenly, and pounced upon a small object.

Only a tuft of red hair; a tiny lock of very red hair. Calmly he took out his pocket-book, extracted the lock found at the force, and compared the two.

"Not a doubt of it—from the same head. That this cart was used by the ruffians is now perfectly clear."

"How much nearer does that bring us to finding dear old Kit?" inquired Anselm, much interested.

"Every inch gained is to the good, Anselm," replied the major. "We are, I hope, on the right road. This cart carried your brother from the force somewhere. The next thing is to find out who drove it."

They returned to the house, and entering the justice room of the abbey, dispatched a messenger for Humphreys, who presently appeared.

So far, only vague rumours had got abroad as to some mishap to the young baronet, but Humphreys did not allude to them. After exchanging greetings with "Master Anselm," a very old friend, he waited to be addressed.

"Mr. Humphreys," said Major Bird, "were any tax-carts taken out yesterday?"

"I drove in one myself to Kirby Moorside," replied the bailiff. "There was a second, I believe, went to Green Skipperton; one of the helpers had to fetch some bran, we'd run short."

"That was all?" said the major.

"So far as I know. But I will inquire and make quite sure if you wish?" answered Humphreys.

"Thank you, not at present. But you say that these carts have been used without your permission. May I ask by whom?" said the questioner significantly.

"Well, sir, you must not press me on that point," responded Humphreys, rubbing his head dubiously. "I did find out that a cart had been taken more than once, by a person who, well, who should have known better; but as he said it should not occur again, I promised not to mention the matter. So I'd rather not, gentlemen; if you please, don't press me."

"But it is absolutely necessary to press you, Mr. Humphreys," urged Major Bird. "It is of the most vital importance we should know who is the person."

"Well, gentlemen, if you insist, it was Mr. Pippett."

The major's eyebrows alone betrayed that the answer was what he expected. Anselm could not restrain an exclamation of surprise.

"And when was it that Mr. Pippett helped himself to one of your tax-carts?" said the major in a minute.

"I found it out first some two or three weeks ago. The last occasion was only yesterday," replied the bailiff.

"Ah: yesterday; do you know that for a fact?" asked the major quietly.

"Not exactly," replied Mr. Humphreys, "but a tax-cart was used yesterday, for I found it dirty in the coach-house this morning. No one could give any account of it, so I ordered it to be left as it was, meaning to make full inquiries."

"That will do for the present, Mr. Humphreys," and the bailiff was dismissed. "This brings the matter close home to our friend Pippett," said the chief constable when he was alone with young Cathennes. "Do you think my suspicions are groundless now, Anselm?"

"It looks ugly, certainly," acquiesced Anselm. "Still——"

"Surely you don't want to take his part?" interrupted Major Bird.

"I? Of course not," said the young man indignantly. "He is a slimy, sycophantic beast, and since this morning I hate him."

"What did he do this morning?" said Bird.

"Why, when I arrived he saluted me as Sir Anselm, as though dear old Kit were really dead and gone," added the young man with increasing warmth.

"I have always understood that he would have much preferred you as a master," hinted the major. "Isn't that so?"

Anselm nodded and said:

"Very likely. I stood by him in the governor's time, and we were about a good deal together. He liked to carry my second gun, and he used to valet me himself, and professed to be very devoted."

A sudden thought struck Major Bird.

"I may be right, or I may be wrong," he said; "the event will prove which, but I believe Pippett stole the will under the impression he was doing you a good turn."

"One for me and two for himself then," assented Anselm. "He, through his confederates, was not long before he applied to me to get money for keeping it back. But don't you think we had better see the fellow at once?"

"I was on the point of suggesting it," continued Bird.

Anselm rang the bell. A servant answered it, to whom Major Bird said:

"Where's Mr. Pippett? Send him here."

The man came back in a few minutes to say that the butler had gone out for a walk—his usual custom an hour or two before luncheon.

"I wish to see him directly he returns," said the chief constable.

One o'clock came—half-past one; luncheon was laid by the assistant butler, the luncheon bell rang, and yet no Pippett had appeared.

"What can have become of him?" said Anselm.

"It is quite obvious," said the major; "he has bolted. All our inquiries have put him on the alert. We must give chase."

There was something in the major's manner which savoured of the keen sportsman when the fox has actually broken covert and gone clean away.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHERE THE WILL WAS FOUND.

No time was lost in inquiring when and where Mr. Pippett had last been seen. It was soon ascertained that he had left the abbey about 11 a.m. He was on foot and walking in the direction of Green Skipperton. A messenger dispatched to that town in due course reported that he had been seen in the outskirts of the town driving in the local butcher's cart. From this he was tracked to the railway station and thence to York. At York for a while the scent was lost, but, working the wire without ceasing, Major Bird presently learnt that a person answering the description of the fugitive butler had taken a ticket for Hull. Pippett's line of escape was now plainly marked. From Hull there is regular steam communication with Sweden, and with Sweden there is no extradition treaty for the surrender of criminals. Once at Gottenburg, Pippett with his ill-gotten gains would be safe from all pursuit.

But he, like other depredators, had reason to curse the invention of the telegraph. Messrs. Wilson and Co., the great steam-packet proprietors of Hull, were speedily advised to be on the look-out for Pippett; so was the chief constable of the town. His description was so accurately given that before nightfall the reply came to the effect that he was in the custody of the Hull police. There was no longer any room for doubt. It was found that before presenting himself at the packet office he had changed two hundred sovereigns into Bank of England notes, and that when arrested he carried another hundred in a belt round his waist.

Pippett was brought back to Green Skipperton the following morning, and at once arraigned before the petty session at the bench. He was charged with conspiracy, an attempt to extort money, and the felonious abduction of Sir Christopher Cathennes. Pippett stoutly denied all knowledge of these crimes. He explained his presence in Hull by saying that he was anxious to see a friend off to Sweden. But he could not explain how he came to be in possession of such a large sum in cash. This very suspicious fact was sufficient to justify a remand, and Pippett was forthwith committed to York Castle, bail being refused.

Still the anxious relatives were no nearer the recovery of Sir Christopher. They were naturally desirous that the law should

take its course with Pippett, but they were still more eager to restore the baronet to his home. Major Bird shared their solicitude, and was if anything a little more keen to unravel the whole mystery because his reputation as a police officer was at stake.

The major himself conducted a search among Pippett's goods and chattels. Accompanied by Foggin, he went to that part of the extensive basement premises which were usually allotted to the butler at the abbey. They consisted of a sitting-room which communicated with an outer area. Beyond the sitting-room was a bedroom and beyond that the plate-room.

They found the sitting-room door locked. It was speedily forced by Inspector Foggin, whose *métier* obliged him to be a bit of a locksmith on occasion, and the three, Anselm, Major Bird and Foggin, entered the sitting-room together. There were evident signs in this apartment of the hasty departure of its occupant. The furniture was all greatly disarranged, the drawers of the table were pulled out and some of their contents were hanging therefrom. Here and there on the floor were articles of apparel which had evidently been brought from the inner room.

To this second doorway they now repaired, and found it, like the first, securely locked. Foggin as before forced his entrance, and they proceeded to conduct their investigation. There were the same disorder and signs of hasty departure, and Major Bird was pointing them out one by one to Anselm, when he paused, and then cried in an excited voice :

"Hush! What in heaven's name was that?"

It was a sound uncommonly like a human groan, and it proceeded from the plate-room, which was beyond the bedroom.

"There's some one there," said Anselm.

"Not a doubt of it," added Foggin. "Listen to that."

The groans were now replaced by a shout in almost frenzied accents for help.

"Quick, quick," said Anselm, "there is some fearful mystery here."

Once more Foggin's skill as a locksmith was put into request, but he had now to do with a patent Chubb, warranted fire and burglar proof, and to pick the lock was quite beyond his skill.

What was to be done now? Pippett alone had the key—or knew where it was to be found. He was at York Castle, forty miles distant, and they could hardly wait till they had communicated with him.

"It would be easy to take the wall down bodily," said Anselm. "Send for Mr. Humphreys at once to bring men with pickaxes and crowbars."

Meanwhile the cries from within continued unchecked.

The thick door of the plate-room, carefully lined with green baize, so far deadened the sound that only an occasional word

could be distinguished here and there. But the purport of all was the same. They were all passionate entreaties for help, and it was quite clear that within some unhappy being lay a prisoner, quite cut off from daylight and the outer world.

By the time the workmen arrived the excitement had grown to fever pitch. There was an agonized haste in all their movements as they plied their tools against the massive wall. Every one tried to help in the great work. Anselm and Major Bird were as busy as the rest, and under these tremendous exertions a breach was soon effected.

Within half an hour of the arrival of the searchers a gap sufficiently large had been made to allow the slight wiry figure of Major Bird to wriggle through. He was followed by Anselm and the trusty Foggin, who, like a true policeman, carried with him a dark lantern. By the light of this they examined the interior of the plate-room, and at once discovered a body lying prostrate upon the floor.

It was Sir Christopher Cathennes himself, bound hand and foot with strong cords. He was now unconscious, although life was certainly not extinct. No doubt he had been wound up to the highest pitch of excitement by the prospect of approaching release, and just when deliverance seemed nearest at hand his strength had given way and he had fainted from exhaustion. They brought him out tenderly and carefully into the bedroom, and immediately releasing him from his bonds, applied all the restoratives that were at hand, Lady Cathennes, who was at once informed of what had occurred, assisting with tremulous eagerness in attending her beloved son. Sir Christopher very soon responded to their care, and, unclosing his eyes, thanked them by a look which spoke volumes.

Some time elapsed before he was strong enough to recount the misadventures which had befallen him. It appeared that immediately after the first affray at Carghill Force, while he was recovering his breath and unconscious of approaching danger, three fresh assailants had fallen upon him. In one he easily recognized Pippett, the butler, all disguised though he was. The other two were quarrymen, with whom, of course, Pippett must have been in league, and to whom was due the execution of the crime from the very first. The baronet struggled manfully for a few moments, but in vain. He was soon overpowered, securely bound hand and foot, and gagged with a handkerchief, but not before he had left his mark on the head or beard of one of the ruffians, for he said he found he had carried off a handful of human hair. Then he was lifted from his feet and borne rapidly through the coppice and up the slope. This journey lasted about half an hour, at the end of which he was cast into a cart, which was driven rapidly away. He lay at the bottom of the vehicle helpless as a log and nearly smothered in hay, altogether in

ignorance of the direction in which the cart was driven, for by this time it was pitch dark. Yet he had an impression that they were bringing him back to Fangfoss. When the cart was finally stopped he was lifted up and deposited in a dry ditch. There he remained for many hours, two of his captors being with him as guard, and it must have been late in the night when they again raised him like the trunk of a tree and brought him away. He was now nearly positive that they were talking of taking him towards his own house, the abbey, but they threatened him with instant death if he uttered a sound, a gratuitous suggestion, seeing that, beyond moaning, the gag in his mouth rendered him incapable of utterance. They approached the abbey by a circuitous road, and at length entered it through the back premises. Having descended a certain number of area-steps, they were admitted into the butler's parlour, which Sir Christopher recognized, and thence into the plate-room, where, as we know, he was found.

The period of the baronet's imprisonment seemed interminable. The plate-room was to all intents and purposes a cell, only indifferently ventilated, and not lighted at all. Pippett visited him at intervals, and brought in supplies, with which, having ungagged his master, he fed him like an infant. Otherwise Sir Christopher, of course for security, was kept continuously bound.

"My poor dear boy," said Lady Cathennes, her eyes brimming with tears, "to think what you must have suffered."

"But tell me, Kit," interposed Anselm, "what you suppose became of the will."

"The will, the will!" Sir Christopher looked from one to the other, in evident confusion of mind. "Ah, to be sure," he suddenly exclaimed; "I had quite forgotten it till now—so indeed must those ruffians. They were thinking of nothing but the money and what they were to do with me. They never attempted to take it from me after I had recovered it at the force, and here it is in my pocket still."

As he spoke he unbuttoned an inner pocket of his coat, and brought out the document which had cost him so dear.

And this was where the will was found.

It is hardly necessary to add, although it is satisfactory to know, that the perpetrators of this outrage, thanks to the untiring exertions of Major Bird, were one and all, with Joseph Pippett at their head, duly indicted, tried, and convicted at York, and are even now undergoing the heavy punishment which was justly awarded them.

RUN TO GROUND.

By MRS. EDWARD KENNARD,

AUTHOR OF "A REAL GOOD THING," "KILLED IN THE OPEN," "THE GIRL IN THE BROWN HABIT," ETC.

THE young ladies of Huntingshire were all agreed that he would have been a most awfully nice young man had he not been so painfully and abominably shy. It was quite useless making up to him.

He did nothing but blush, and stutter, and look another way in spite of their best endeavours to break through the crust of his reserve. He was like a snail in his shell, only snails sometimes come out, and he never did. All their sweet smiles and pretty speeches were wasted. This was the more provoking because Anthony, commonly called Tony Tollemache, was not only undeniably good-looking, but also had magnificent expectations. It was impossible for any well-brought-up girl to shut her eyes to his merits; but if a young man can't look a young woman in the face, if he grows pink every time he is spoken to, and has no more notion of the art of flirtation than a baby, what is the good of him? He is just so much valuable male flesh and muscle thrown away.

Tony's father, Sir Percival Tollemache, was an enormously rich man, possessing between fifty and sixty thousand a year, and as the world was persuaded that he did not spend a quarter of his income, it looked with exceeding favour upon his only son, and made up its mind that since Sir Percival had but one daughter the bulk of his wealth would necessarily descend to Tony.

Added to these advantages, the young man had others, which counted for almost though not quite as much with his feminine admirers. He possessed a pair of blue eyes that would have been simply adorable had he but granted a few opportunities of realizing their full attractions; also a pleasant, open face, good to look upon, and which pleased the women by its combined expression of modesty and manliness. How sad it was to see all these gifts personal and otherwise completely thrown away.

Tony was so absurdly and idiotically shy that even Miss Arabella Whinborough, the prettiest girl and the most audacious flirt in all Huntingshire, could do nothing with him and had positively to give him up in despair. She smiled her sweetest at

the foolish youth, and he only blushed and looked confused. She paid him the most extravagant compliments, trying her very hardest to extract one or two in return, and what did he do? Why, nothing but stammer and turn scarlet. She gave him every encouragement; vowed she loved tobacco, and dogs and even ferrets, but all to no purpose. Tony kept his head, and in spite of Miss Arabella's charms refused to lay himself at her feet.

The dowagers shook their heads despondently and said to each other, "My dear, what is to be done with a young man who has not a word to say for himself, who looks the picture of misery when he is in the society of a pretty girl, and who has not an idea in his head beyond horses and hunting? And yet, what a pity it is to be sure. He would make such a good husband and be so thoroughly domestic in his tastes."

Tony had been to Cheam and to Eton, and had learnt as much at either place as young gentlemen with plenty of pocket-money and a natural disinclination to work generally do. Afterwards he went to Oxford, where he had the distinguished honour of winning the Grinds. On the whole, his college career was fairly satisfactory. He did not take honours certainly, but then what need is there for a baronet's son and the reputed heir to sixty thousand a year to bother his head about classics and mathematics? Why, he comes into the world with honours without having to work for them. There they are, all ready for him. Lucky dog!

To Tony's credit, he did nothing to disgrace himself whilst at Oxford. He did not take to riotous living; he did not play practical jokes on the Dons, and if he spent a large sum of money on the hire of horse-flesh, why, that was an expenditure which the sporting old squire could of all others best excuse.

So Tony came back in high favour to live under the paternal roof.

But by the end of two years Sir Percival began to show symptoms of discontent. Sir Percival's health for some time past had been getting very infirm, and he had taken it into his head that Tony ought to marry and secure an heir. This was the darling wish of the old man's heart and it grew to be a perfect craze; for Tony was only three-and-twenty, and did not see matters at all in the same light. He loved hunting and shooting, and sport of every kind, and it seemed to him that a wife might interfere very considerably with his pursuing hounds six days a week, and finishing up the evening with a pleasant little nap in an arm-chair. Indeed, when he thought over the grave question of matrimony, he could not call to mind a single woman of his acquaintance whom he should like to make Mrs. Tollemache. They all frightened him, and were either so confoundedly clever, so embarrassingly friendly, or so ridiculously airified. Yes, there was one, though he had almost forgotten what she was like; it was two whole years since he had seen her, and she might now be

as bad as the rest of them—little Kitty Kinahan, with whom he had often played in his boyish days, and whom he still remembered as “a regular brick.”

But Kitty had been sent away to some school in Germany—he did not approve of a foreign education for girls—and no doubt when she returned to her native land she would be transformed into a tight-waisted, giggled, frivolous young lady, like the majority of those he saw about in the world. And, young as he was, he vowed never to make one of these his wife.

Tony might not be clever, but he possessed a large amount of common sense, and in his quiet, bashful way was very observant. He did not care for “smart” girls, in the usual sense of the word. He thought them artificial, insincere, and altogether “bad form.” All the outward signs of big fringe, false hair, pink cheeks, red lips, white nose, tiny waist and voluminous dress-improver he viewed with suspicion. Kitty had none of these things before she left for school. It was a thousand pities she ever went. So mused Tony whenever he gave the subject a thought, which, however, was only at rare intervals.

It is the opening meet of the season. The fixture is at Tollemache Hall; and Tony, as he sits at breakfast, clad in a brand new pink coat and spotless leathers, with his fresh, good-natured face full of joyous anticipation, looks very straight and goodly. Sir Percival, sitting opposite, gazes fondly at him. He himself is too much of an invalid to hunt any longer, but he takes as keen an interest in the sport as ever, and shows it by always having plenty of foxes in his coverts.

“What are you going to ride to-day, my boy?” he asks. “I forgot to inquire before.”

“Brilliantine in the morning,” replies the young man; “she’s very big, and wants work. In the afternoon, when we have got rid of the crowd, I shall change on to dear old Dragon.”

“Ah! you will be safely conveyed, and I hope some of these cubs may show you their heels. By-the-bye, Tony,” and he glanced at his son to see what effect the intelligence would produce, “Constance Fergusson is coming out to-day; I had a note from her father this morning.”

“Oh, indeed!” rejoined Tony, turning very red, though the tone of his voice betrayed little or no emotion; “I suppose she’ll only potter about as usual. I wonder that girl hunts; she’s so dreadfully nervous on horse-back; it can’t be any pleasure to her.”

“I don’t think ladies ought to go too hard,” said Sir Percival diplomatically; “they’re pretty ornaments at the covert side, but when hounds run they are generally in the way.”

“Some, not all. There was little Kitty Kinahan for instance. She could ride as well as any man. And lord! what nerves she had to be sure, I remember her jumping a five-barred gate when she was only fourteen.”

"Kitty was always a little tom-boy," said Sir Percival shortly, "whereas Miss Fergusson is a most beautiful and accomplished young woman, whom I should be proud to welcome as my daughter-in-law."

Tony made no reply. He was quite aware of his father's preference for Miss Fergusson, and he had nothing to say against her; nevertheless he mentally characterized her as cold and haughty, and in spite of her good looks, which were undeniable, never felt quite at his ease in her presence. She gave him an uncomfortable sense of superiority. And Tony did not like proud, clever girls. He did not mind their being stupid, if only they were jolly.

There was a slight pause. Then Sir Percival gave a little, embarrassed cough, and said:

"Tony, my boy, you know my wishes; I need not press them any more, but if Miss Fergusson is out to-day I do hope and trust that you will pay her some attention."

"Of course, of course, father," he replied in an off-hand manner. "I'm always civil to her, when we happen to meet."

"That's right, Tony. I think she likes you, eh?"

"I'm sure I don't know whether she does, or does not. She's not a girl to show her feelings."

"Perhaps not, perhaps not. The better sort never do jump down a man's throat; it's only the ones who are dying to get married at any cost; but you take my word for it, Tony, she's a sweet girl."

"Very likely," answered Tony, thinking it easier to acquiesce than to enter into an argument. "But there are a good many different kinds of sweetness in this world." Whereupon he artfully changed the subject, and brought the conversation once more back to the far more congenial topic of sport.

A brave show assembled at Tollemache Hall that day. All the beauty and fashion of the county were gathered together before Sir Percival's hospitable doors, and many were the gallant men and fair women who turned up at the trysting-place. The Crackington hounds were ever a popular pack, but of late seasons the sport they had shown placed them quite in the foremost rank. So large was the concourse of people that it was considerably after the appointed time before a move could be effected. A fox soon showed in one of the laurel spinnies adjoining the house, and, though a faint-hearted brute, the speckled ladies rattled him in good style for the greater part of the forenoon. He afforded plenty of life and movement, though he obstinately declined to face the open, and people were to be seen galloping about Sir Percival's fine ancestral park in every direction.

It was impossible for folks to see each other or indulge in much coffee-housing. Many of the dearest friends never even met. They were scattered about in every direction, and Tony

had a good excuse for not paying his respects to Miss Fergusson. That young lady, clad in a perfectly-fitting habit, looked very handsome, and once or twice he saw her in the distance, but Sir Percival's exhortation had roused a spirit of contrariness and he purposely kept aloof. He didn't see why he should be forced into marrying Constance Fergusson.

Thus the morning passed away, and ardent sportsmen had already begun to vote the proceedings "extremely slow." Accordingly, towards three o'clock, the huntsmen trotted off at a brisk pace to draw one of the crack coverts of the hunt, and no sooner had it been applied to than a magnificent old dog-fox stole away. Unfortunately he made his escape unperceived by the bulk of the field, and as he took to his heels in a manner that showed him to be no tyro at the game, a great many people were left behind.

Tony, amongst others, did not get a good start, but by dint of hard galloping, and thanks to a fast horse, he managed to catch up the pack before they had gone very far. The fox had set his mark straight for an unusually stiff line of country, and there was a burning scent. Hurrah! hurrah! They were in for a run. How glorious was the sensation, when one felt it again for the first time after many months. "Dragon, old man, don't pull quite so hard. You're on level terms with them now, and we won't let them best us again." Thus murmured Tony, as he leant forwards and patted the bay's glossy neck. Meanwhile the fox was making the best of his way, and had already set a nasty bottom and two stiff ox-rails between himself and his adversaries. Dragon got over them safely, but he had to twist his strong hind-quarters in order to clear the last oxer. Tony's surprise was therefore considerable when he saw a female skirt fluttering ahead, and clearing each fence in succession, immediately in the wake of the huntsman. He gave Dragon rather an unnecessary touch of the spur, which that good horse resented with an indignant shake of his lean, thoroughbred head. Tony had a boy's dislike to being beaten by a woman, deeming it terribly *infra dig*.

In another minute he was alongside, and took a shy but curious look at the fair Diana who was riding so well and boldly. He looked again. She had altered a bit, but still surely—yes—and his heart gave a bound which he could not understand at all—it *was* his old friend and playmate, Kitty Kinahan. He would have known her anywhere by the way she handled her horse.

"Bravo! Kitty," he said, in approving tones, as he landed a little behind her, over a stiff, stake-bound fence. "I see you have not forgotten how to ride, in spite of the Germans."

She turned round with a start of undisguised pleasure, as natural as it was spontaneous.

"Oh! Tony; is it you? I made sure I should have seen you at the meet, and was so disappointed not to have done so." Then, as she noticed certain subtle changes in his aspect, that told her



"The cob rapped a piece of timber hard, landed on his head, and pitched Kitty off on the near side."

"RUN TO GROUND."

he had grown from a youth to a man since last she had addressed him in this familiar style, she coloured deeply and added: "I beg your pardon. I was thinking of old times and forgot that I ought to call you *Mr. Tollemache* now."

Directly he heard the sound of her clear, innocent voice, he knew that she was the same jolly little thing with whom he had gone bird's-nesting and fishing when a boy, and whom he had been wont to order about exactly as he pleased. She had grown taller and more womanly looking, but in other respects he could detect no change. The brown eyes were as frank and honest, the laugh as ringing, the expression of the round, rosy face as bright and good-tempered as of yore.

"Nonsense," he said, with a smile. "You'll do no such thing. You'll just stick to Tony, as you've done all your life. *Mr. Tollemache*, indeed! What rubbish."

"But Tony, you've grown so tall and so imposing looking. I'm really afraid of you."

"Very well then, I'll call you Miss Kitty, or, better still, Miss Kinahan. Do you remember our paddling together in the burn, and your insisting on drying my feet with your little pocket-handkerchief? You were just ten years old then—*Miss Kinahan*, and were not half so retiring in those days as you are now."

She laughed, a merry, unconscious laugh, and from that moment ceremony vanished. As they tore through the fresh air and their horses flew over the flat pastures, he took another look at her, just to make sure he was right in his opinions. She was not the least pretty. He ascertained that fact without the smallest difficulty. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would not have bestowed a thought upon her in *Constance Fergusson's* presence. She had a freckled complexion, and a big mouth, and a fleshy nose; but the unmistakable good humour, honesty and vivacity stamped on her countenance were better than beauty in his eyes. Anyway, he preferred them greatly to *Miss Fergusson's* straight, classical features and proud bearing.

The only thing he thought open to improvement was Kitty's figure, but then no figure could look well in such a habit. It was a regular sight, and might have belonged to her grandmother, since it actually had pleats round the waist. No wonder Kitty's proportions were sack-like and undefined. But she could sit a horse like no other girl, and although very indifferently mounted—as he could tell at a glance—managed to get over the country in wonderful style. And how she enjoyed hunting! How her brown eyes sparkled, and her plump cheeks glowed, as the pair threw fence after fence behind them, and the company grew more and more select. It was a pleasure to see a person so thoroughly and innocently happy. And what nerves she had, too! She did not seem to know what fear meant, but drove her cob along with unequalled skill and vigour.

These qualities were the more apparent because he was by no means such a hunter as a man would choose to cross Hunting-shire upon; but Kitty's father was poor, and had a large family. His Irish rents were irregularly paid, and he could not afford to mount his daughter well. The stout cob she was riding had to go between the shafts, and it was only occasionally that he could be spared for a whole day's hunting.

He jumped very well, when fresh, but he was naturally slow, and to-day the pace had blown him. He rapped a piece of timber hard with all fours, landed on his head, almost recovered, staggered, then fell heavily forwards, pitching Kitty off on the near side. Luckily she fell clear, and was on her feet again in a minute.

"Go on, go on, Tony," she called out. "Don't lose the remainder of the run for me. I'm all right."

But for once in his life, Tony suddenly became indifferent to the chase. He vowed he did not care whether they killed their fox or not. She was such a little brick, such a dear, good, plucky little soul that he was not going to leave her in the lurch when she came to grief. If he had had a fall, she would have stuck to him he felt sure, and he would do the same by her. So he pulled Dragon up to a standstill, re-mounted Kitty, though not without difficulty, and finally, when it was discovered to their joint consternation that the cob had fallen dead lame on the off fore—insisted on accompanying her home.

In fact, Tony was quite surprised at his own gallantry, but then Kitty did not count. She was not like a formidable young lady, who set her cap at him, and asked him foolish questions, and frightened him out of his life. She could talk sensibly about dogs and horses, and enter into a man's pursuits, and liked hearing all about the coverts and the hounds, and what had happened in sporting circles during her absence. So they got on most amicably, and Tony found himself talking away nineteen to the dozen, whilst Kitty fell into her old rôle of listener. And all at once as they rode home together, it struck him, that if he must have a wife, he would not so much mind marrying little Kitty Kinahan. She was a real, good sort, fond of hunting and honest country pursuits, and thoroughly practical. Moreover he felt sure that she would not hen-peck him, and he had his doubts how long he should retain the upper hand if he yielded to his father's wishes, and made up to Miss Fergusson. The idea was quite new, but it took such a hold upon him, that when he shook hands with Kitty at parting, he said:

"By the way, are you coming to our hunt ball next month? You ought to; everybody will be there."

"I don't know," she replied; "I only returned yesterday, and have not thought about it yet."

"Oh, do come, because if you will I will too, although balls

are not much in my line as a rule, and I'm a shockingly bad dancer."

"Quite good enough for me, Tony," she said with a laugh. "I'd rather ride than dance any day."

This sentiment met with Mr. Tollemache's highest approval. He turned very red, and was seized by a fit of shyness.

"Look here, Kitty," he said, not summoning up sufficient courage to look her in the face, "send down to the station on the day of the ball, there's a good girl."

"What on earth for?" she inquired with innocent surprise.

"Only for a bouquet; I'm going to send you one from town. And I say, Kitty, if—if," beginning to flounder terribly in his speech, "you wear my flowers at this ball, I shall take it as a sign that—er—that you like me, whereas if you leave them at home," breaking off abruptly and bending down to adjust a stirrup-strap which seemed suddenly to have gone wrong.

"Yes, if I leave it at home—what then, Tony?" and she looked at him with candid eyes.

"Never mind, nothing; there! Do you understand?"

It was difficult to do so from his words; but no doubt Kitty detected some deeper meaning in his flushed cheeks and softened voice, for all of a sudden her round young face turned as scarlet as his own. She was not quite sure, but she thought that she comprehended. If only they had looked into each other's eyes they might have removed any existing uncertainty, but this they were much too bashful to do. Their hearts fluttered curiously, but they parted without further explanations. Possibly none were needed. Young people have other language besides the voice.

A whole month elapsed, and although Tony's attentions to Kitty were not marked enough to give rise to comment, the girl was very happy, living in a paradise of her own, for she was almost sure that he cared for her in spite of his odd, quiet ways. He had always been a sort of hero to her. From her earliest childhood she had loved him unconsciously, and now she loved him consciously. No expressions of affection escaped him, but instinct told her that he liked her better than he did any of the other girls about, and she felt so glad and so grateful. The only thing that distressed her was his wealth. She wished he had not a penny, just for her to show him that she was fond of him for his own sake.

As time slipped away and Tony became no more demonstrative she began to fix all her hopes upon the hunt ball. She had a belief that it would prove an epoch in her existence.

At length the long-expected day arrived. On the previous afternoon she had met Tony out walking.

"Don't forget to send to the station for that bouquet," he said with simulated unconcern. "You remember what I said."

A thrill of pleasure ran through her frame.

"Yes, Tony, I remember. It was not likely that I should forget."

From an early hour Kitty was in a regular fidget. She herself walked to the station after breakfast, in order to meet the first train from town. Tony's flowers, *dear*, DEAR Tony, why, of course she would wear them.

"Is there a parcel or a hamper for me, Miss Kinahan?" she asked, with a happy smile.

"No, nothing," was the reply.

She felt momentarily disappointed, but she had scarcely expected that the bouquet would arrive so soon. She would again contrive to meet the mid-day train. But at mid-day the same answer was forthcoming to her eager inquiry. There was but one more chance—at eight o'clock, and she coaxed old William, their solitary groom, to ride down to the station and bring back the anxiously-expected bouquet. He went, but returned without it. Poor Kitty was bitterly disappointed, and all the time she was dressing for the ball tortured herself by saying, "He does not care for me really; I was a fool to think that he did. I am so dowdy and so plain."

When she entered the ball-room she was silent and unusually subdued. Her dress, a new one, did not fit, and she was conscious of looking her worst, for her eyes were red and her cheeks inflamed, and her hair, which she had tried to curl for the occasion, would not go right, but kept straggling about in all directions and falling over her nose. The very first person she met was Tony, looking as handsome as a young god in his red evening coat with its light silk facings. He came eagerly towards her, then stopped short as if looking for something. A blank disappointed look stole over his face, and he turned sharply away. "Tony, Tony!" rose to her lips, but she had not courage to utter the words. Then a wild flood of bitterness swept through the poor little girl's heart. She was so ugly and ill-dressed, and of course it was only natural when there were such numbers of pretty women present with lovely frocks and coquettish manners—women who knew how to flirt and attract men—that he should prefer them. And yet, for "old sake's sake" she thought he would have asked her to dance once. But he never came near her or gave any opportunity of explaining about the bouquet, and she spent a miserable evening. Tony danced the whole night with Miss Fergusson or else sat out with her in a corner, whilst she had to twiddle round with men she did not care two straws about and pretend that she was enjoying herself immensely.

Her pillow was moist with scalding tears when she went to bed, and her heart ached as if a sharp knife had been run right through it. Balls indeed! If all balls were like this she vowed she never would go to another.

Next morning Constance Fergusson received a letter which

occasioned her the greatest surprise. It was from Tony Tolle-mache, and it contained a formal proposal. The proposal, however, was most curiously worded, so much so that, being a sensible young lady, she determined to give herself a few hours for reflection before sending an answer. She was very fond of Tony. If she had consulted her own inclinations only she would have said yes there and then, but the stiffness of the letter made her pause. Instinctively she felt that the writer did not love her, and she was too proud to become the wife of any man who did not really care for her as she cared for him.

In this state of mental uncertainty she put on her hat and went to see Kitty Kinahan, her dearest friend, who lived close by. She found Kitty sunk in the depths of despair, and for a long time the girl refused to divulge the cause of her grief. But it is a great relief to unbosom oneself to some one, and little by little the whole story came out. "And, oh! Conny!" she concluded, throwing her arms round the other's neck and sobbing bitterly, "he *did* send the bouquet after all. There was some delay on the railway, and it turned up this morning. I am sure Tony was angry. I could see it by his face, and oh! dear, oh! dear, what on earth am I to do?"

"Do!" echoed Constance, firmly, though she turned very pale, "why, go to him, of course and tell him exactly what has happened. He meant that if you wore the bouquet it would be a sign that you were fond of him, and that if you didn't you would have nothing to say to him. I see it all. You must explain."

"Oh! no, Conny, I can't, indeed, I can't. It would be so horribly indelicate, and just think if you were mistaken. Why, I should die of shame. Matters must stay as they are, though my heart is breaking."

Constance gave a kind though rather wistful smile. She did not argue the point, but her mind was made up. Shortly afterwards she took leave of Kitty, kissing her affectionately and bidding her be of good cheer.

"Don't cry," she said. "Things will all come right in the end. You see if they don't."

And then the girl, who Tony thought so cold and haughty went straight home and wrote him a letter. She said, "If you love me honestly and truly I am ready to become your wife, but oh! for Heaven's sake, be sincere and tell me the truth. I cannot believe in your affection, but I do believe that you care for Kitty Kinahan, and have only proposed to me through some misunderstanding. She could not take your bouquet to the ball last night because it did not arrive till this morning. I know what passed between you, and, oh! Tony, if you love her and not me, make her your wife. She is a good, honest girl, and she loves you very dearly." When Tony got this letter he jumped up in

great excitement, and ordering a horse to be saddled, galloped off and had a long interview with Constance Fergusson.

What took place at it she never divulged, but from that day he never again called her either cold or proud. They parted the warmest of friends and he did not see the tears which rose to her eyes as she watched his straight back disappearing down the avenue, or heard the sad, soft voice that murmured, "I have done right, and he is happy, but oh ! it was hard—very hard."

He rode to Kitty Kinahan's. He found that young lady in the lowest of spirits, but he managed to cheer her up most wonderfully, and left her all smiles and blushes.

Sir Percival was disappointed when he first heard the news. Kitty Kinahan was a little nobody, Irish moreover, and had not a drop of blue blood in her veins. She had no presence, no dignity, no looks. So he averred, much to Tony's indignation, who by this time was head over ears in love. But when he paid his future daughter-in-law a visit she won his kind old heart completely.

"Hulloa ! young lady," he said to the trembling girl, with a testiness half real and half assumed, "what's this I hear ? Who gave you leave to run my son to ground in this audacious manner, eh !"

Kitty was frightened out of her wits, but she looked up into his face with a pair of shining eyes, and placing one little, timid, hand on his sleeve, said :

"Oh ! Sir Percival, don't be angry with me. I am not half good enough for Tony. I know that without being told, but he is so strong, and so brave, and so handsome that I could not help loving him. It was stronger than I. Indeed, indeed I will do my very best to make him happy, if only you will forgive me for being fond of him." And then her voice died away to nothing, and she burst into tears.

Her utter humility disarmed the baronet. A strange huskiness impeded his utterance. He put his quivering hand on her glossy head and smoothed back the hair from her brow.

"My dear," he said, "you are a good girl, and I am not sure that Tony has not made a wise choice after all. Let us be friends." And when a year after their marriage Mrs. Anthony presented her loving husband with a son and heir, the old squire's delight was complete. He was convinced that there was no such woman in the world as his daughter-in-law.

And Kitty kept her word.

She made Tony perfectly happy and he had never cause to regret marrying her.

Their lives are simple, honest, healthy.

They may not be a clever couple. There are people indeed who call them fools, for they know nothing or next to nothing of the ologies and the sciences ; of spiritualism and æstheticism or

any other ism. They love horses and dogs, stop at home and look after their children and their household, and are universally beloved by all those with whom they have any dealings. And, above everything, they suit each other. They are sensible and practical and don't expect impossibilities out of life.

It was a good day's work for both of them, when, in Sir Percival's hearty hunting language, little, plump, good-natured Kitty Kinahan ran Tony Tollemache to ground, and in spite of his shyness secured the catch of the county.

Miss Arabella Whinborough called her a "nasty designing thing." But then pleasantness, unconsciousness, and sweetness of temper had succeeded where paint and powder had failed.

Constance did not marry for some years, but finally she accepted a noble widower and made a very beautiful and stately countess. She is always a welcome visitor at Tollemache Hall, and Tony treats her with peculiar tenderness and courtesy.

As for Sir Percival, everybody laughs at him and loves him for the way in which he dandles that precious baby, "just as if," say all the insulted matrons, "nobody had ever had a baby before!"

JOHN SMITH'S DOUBLE.

By MRS. H. LOVETT CAMERON,

AUTHOR OF "IN A GRASS COUNTRY," "NECK OR NOTHING," "A DEVOUT LOVER," ETC.

I AM fully alive to the fact that the name of John Smith is neither rare nor original, that there is no flavour either of romance or of aristocratic origin about its abrupt dual monosyllables, and that it is alike ill calculated to arouse sympathy in feminine hearts or interest in feminine curiosity. Yet, in spite of these obvious drawbacks, I still maintain that it is a good honest John Bullish kind of name; that it has a ring of good sterling qualities and of sound common-sense about it, and that although it is owned by many hundreds of Englishmen, some of them no doubt in lowly ranks of life, and by others also in positions of the very highest respectability, it is, notwithstanding, a name of which no sensible man need be ashamed. And there is no doubt that I ought to be in a position to speak with authority on this subject; from the very simple fact that it is my own name.

Plain and simple John Smith. I am not John Orlando, or John Marmaduke, or John Algernon Smith; nothing of this kind was done by my godfathers and godmothers to soften or to mitigate the crudeness of the cognomen, no subterfuge was afforded me wherewith to cheat myself or my friends into soft delusions of a double surname or to supply a flavouring of refinement to a homely and unvarnished fact.

No; they had no consideration for me. Smith being my family name, they tacked a plain John on to it without the slightest delicacy of feeling and apparently without the faintest shadow of remorse.

Brutal, however, as was their conduct, I am constrained, nevertheless, to own that as the events of this world frequently turn out in direct contradiction to any theories we may have formed beforehand concerning their probable issue, so the fact of my bald and unattractive name, instead of being at all prejudicial to my advancement in life, has, on the contrary, never stood in my way, and in one memorable and never-to-be-forgotten instance it has rendered me a great and inestimable service.

Something, in short, happened to me which altered for the better the whole of my life, and which never could have happened to me if my name had been Howard, or Vivian, or De Vere, or anything else in fact, save plain and homely John Smith.

It was a year ago last Christmas time, on the 20th of December, that I started, full of good spirits and good health, from Euston

Station to take a fortnight of well-earned holiday in one of the best known of our hunting counties.

I am passionately fond of hunting, but from the circumstances of my life had never hitherto been in a position to indulge in my favourite pastime. I am a barrister in fair practice, and although still a young man my time was so little my own that I had never for some years been able to take even a week's holiday during the months that are consecrated to the sport of kings.

I did not in fact own a hunter of my own, and an occasional "mount" upon one of my friend's thoroughbreds was the nearest approach to the joys of the chase which I had enjoyed ever since I had been called to the Bar.

Well, last Christmas—the how, why and wherefore need not be entered into—I found myself unexpectedly with a clear idle fortnight upon my hands, in nice mild open weather and nothing particular to do with it.

I had, I am deeply thankful to say, no family claims upon me; no home-gathering clamoured for my presence amidst a tribe of unsympathetic and uncongenial brothers and sisters, and nobody who could be said to have the smallest right to interfere with my digestive organs was able to compel me to make myself ill by devouring roast turkey, supplemented by that unspeakably horrible national dish so dear to the British heart; that compound of all abomination in cookery, that remnant of the orgies of a coarse and savage race which still maintains so obstinate a hold upon the affections of the country, and which we have hitherto looked in vain to the progress of civilization to sweep away—the Christmas plum-pudding.

This at least was spared me.

My parents were dead, my only brother was in India, and my sister was wintering at Mentone with her husband and children.

I could do as I liked with my Christmas day, eat mutton cutlets and *omelette aux fines herbes* for my dinner if I chose, unthwarted and unreprieved; and in my secret heart I determined to do so. Man, however, proposes, whilst woman very frequently disposes of these and similar rash determinations, as will be hereafter related.

Having, however, nothing to do but to please myself, I took the very sensible advice of a friend upon the subject.

"Go down and have a gallop in the shires, Jack," said this gentleman, Walter Ridway by name. I must, I think, here mention that my intimates in kindly despite of the cruelty of my god-parents were in the habit of compromising matters by calling me "Jack."

I intimated that I did not quite see my way to this as I had no hunters, and it seemed hardly worth while to invest in a stud for a couple of weeks.

"Oh! of course you needn't do that," cried Ridway; "I know that, but what you can do is to go down to the 'Fox and Hounds,' at Shellerton, and get my old friend Dickson, the landlord, to fit

you out; it's a capital inn, he does you first rate, and he has got some very decent animals; you can hire a fresh quad. every day, and you'll not find yourself worse mounted than nine men out of ten whom you will meet out, I can tell you. Dickson knows me well, I stopped there a month two years ago and had a ripping good time. If you write to him and mention my name, he'll look after you and give you the best."

"Why don't you come too?"

"Can't, my dear boy. The gov'nor would never forgive me if I didn't go home for Christmas; he is getting old, you see, and I'm wanted to carve the turkey."

"Ah! poor fellow!" and I sighed my compassion for him from the very bottom of my heart.

To make a long story short, I took Walter's advice, and having settled with my clerk to be away a fortnight, I took my place in the express at Euston with the full determination of enjoying my short holiday thoroughly.

It was a first-class carriage, and I believed I was going to have it to myself. I spread out my rugs, and deposited my dressing-bag and bundle of hunting crops and sticks on the seat beside me, and proceeded to unfold my special edition, when suddenly I became aware of a little group of ladies on the platform just outside.

"Here, this carriage will do, Ethel—is this through to Shelterton, guard?" The guard touched his cap and opened the carriage door—*my* carriage door.

"You had better jump in," continued the elderly lady who had first spoken, but the two younger ladies in the group were holding each other's hands and whispering to each other; apparently they had a very good joke between them, for they laughed and laughed again, and I overheard one of them say, "He might be in the train, you know," to which the one addressed before as Ethel replied, "Don't; you make me shudder! and besides I am in hopes he won't come at all. He has never answered papa's last letter, now it is getting so near he evidently doesn't relish the prospect. He only said in his last that he would take us unexpectedly some day."

"I assure you I am told he is a very good fellow, and some people would think you remarkably lucky," replied the other.

And then there was more laughter and more whispering.

The guard came up. "Get in! get in!" cried the elder lady, "you will be left behind."

"Good-bye, Ethel."

"Good-bye, Kate," cried the girls, and Miss Ethel—she *was* after all the taller and better looking of the two—sprang into the carriage, the door was shut to, but she still hung out of the window blowing kisses and waving her hands to her friends upon the platform until the train carried us out of the station.

Then she drew back with the smile still upon her lips and quite by accident her eyes met mine. Perhaps she had hardly realized

before that there was anybody else in the carriage. She got rather red, pursed up her lips into sudden gravity and went and sat down by the further window.

I took as many furtive glances at her as I dared, but she opened her book and looked so primly and so persistently at its pages that I had no other alternative than to study my newspaper in dignified and respectful silence.

After about half an hour of this course of action, something quite irresistible made me very suddenly lower my paper. I found my companion's eyes fixed, not upon me, as perhaps in my vanity I had fondly hoped, but upon something beside me upon the seat; and the expression in her face was so singular and so intent that I could not help following the direction of her eyes to find out what she could possibly be staring at with such evident curiosity.

I found that she was looking at a white luggage-label which my housekeeper had tied to the handle of my bag, and upon which, the careful soul—fearful, no doubt, lest like the little boy going back to school I should “take and lose myself”—had written in a large and bold hand:

“Mr. John Smith, passenger, Shellerton.”

This was what was absorbing the attention of my fellow-traveller.

Her gaze was one of such extraordinary and peculiar interest that it quite startled me. Was she merely astonished to find that I was bound for the same station as herself, or is it possible that she had never met anybody of the name of John Smith in her life before?

I moved uneasily in my place. She lifted a pair of beautiful dark eyes and fixed them upon my face.

“Is your name really John Smith?” She did not blush at all as she asked this.

I murmured a somewhat confused assent.

“And you are going to Shellerton?”

“Yes.”

“You are going to hunt?”

“Yes, I hope so.”

“Then you have made up your mind to come to Shellerton after all?”

I began to be slightly bewildered.

“I have certainly made up my mind to go to Shellerton,” I answered smiling. This pretty young lady was assuredly somewhat eccentric.

“Where are your horses?” she asked after a short pause, during which she continued to look at me with evident interest.

“Well——” this question was somewhat difficult to answer; I hesitated.

“I hope you have not sent any down from London; papa would be so much annoyed.”

“Indeed; why so?”

"Because he expects to mount you—he would be quite hurt if you brought horses—he is looking forward to mounting you."

"That is very good of him," I murmured, and then I ran my hand rather wildly through my back hair. There was beginning to be an element of the Arabian nights in it; was I going mad or was I dreaming?

"I think I must introduce myself to you," here said my companion with the prettiest smile and blush in the world; "although I daresay you guess who I am—I am Ethel Hilton—now I think you know a good deal about me," she added laughing outright, and at that she put forth a pretty little brown-gloved hand and laid it confidently and unceremoniously in mine.

I felt that she must be labouring under some extraordinary mistake, and that it had become my duty to endeavour to set things right.

"You are most kind, Miss Hilton; but really I do not quite know what to say—it is very embarrassing——"

"Very embarrassing," she admitted at once with an engaging candour; "but we must make it as little embarrassing as we can, and after all, you know"—and here she looked down shyly and withdrew her hand from mine—"after all I may not like you—or you may not like me."

"But I *do* like you," I cried; "how could I possibly do otherwise than like you? and I cannot help hoping you like me a little bit—or else——"

"Or else I should not have introduced myself to you," she said, finishing off quite glibly and calmly the sentence I had hardly ventured to conclude myself. "No, that is quite true. Very well, then, Mr. Smith, we will, if you like, agree that at all events we are not prejudiced *against* each other," and thereat she smiled at me so bewitchingly and looked so ravishingly lovely that my heart began to beat and my head to go round.

One more I made a deliberate effort for conscience sake.

"Are you quite certain, Miss Hilton, that you are not making some mistake—that—that—you are not taking too much for granted about me? Your father, for instance—you mentioned your father—I don't know him at all, you know."

"No, of course you don't know him," she answered with undisturbed serenity. "Of course you don't know him; how could you know him? But he is prepared to like you and he was very fond of your father, you know."

"Was he?"

"Oh! very; he constantly talks about him."

"Does he?" I began to give myself up to my fate; what was the use of struggling?

"Are you *sure* that you know who I am?" I asked once more in a battered and feeble tone of voice—it was the last struggle of an expiring entity.

"Of course I know," she laughed. "You are Mr. John Smith whom we are expecting and you are on your way to Shellerton to stay with papa at Shellerton Hall."

"I had intended to stay at the inn—at the 'Fox and Hounds,'" I murmured.

"At the inn!" she exclaimed with a horror-stricken look. "Great heavens! don't let papa ever hear that you contemplated such a thing; he would be mortally offended—he would *never* forgive you. For heaven's sake if he meets me at the station do not breathe a word of such a thing to him; take it as a matter of course that you are coming to us: he has been expecting you for days."

"Has he really?"

"At the inn indeed!" she repeated, as though unable to get over the enormity of the suggestion. "How angry he would be if he heard of it! the son of his dearest friend! You know they were at Westminster together."

"I think my father was at Winchester, not Westminster," I murmured.

"Oh, no, he wasn't; it was at Westminster," she answered quite confidently. "You are confusing the two together because they both begin with a W. He was at Westminster."

I began to feel sure that it *must* have been Westminster.

"It was the most romantic friendship, wasn't it?" she continued; "the sort of thing one reads of in books, but scarcely ever meets with in real life. Well, you and I can conceive *how* great and extraordinary the romance of it was by the singularity of the upshot of it, which is, as you said, very embarrassing for us," and here she laughed quite merrily and gaily, blushing a little, too, as she laughed. It seemed to me that I was listening to a chapter of my family history of which I surely ought to have been cognisant, but of which I was somehow in absolute ignorance. What on earth had my worthy and defunct parent done or said? What folly had he been guilty of? What extraordinary mental attitude towards me had he by his actions brought about in the opinions of Mr. and Miss Hilton?

"You know, I suppose, that my father is dead?" I thought I might venture to say, with a becoming gravity of demeanour.

"Oh, yes," and her face became grave at once. "I ought not to have laughed, I suppose. It was very thoughtless of me, but then he died such a long time ago."

"Five years."

"Five years! Oh, more than that; seven at the very least. I can't forget it because, though I was quite a child, papa was so horribly miserable; he never spoke a word to me for a week, I remember. I was fourteen I know, so that makes it seven years ago, for, as you know, I am just twenty-one."

I really had not the heart to contradict her. Perhaps it was I who was mistaken, and perhaps time had gone on faster than I

had imagined and that it really was seven years ago since my poor old father died. Instead of disputing the fact, I only murmured with fatuity, as I gazed adoringly into her lovely eyes:

"So you are twenty-one."

"Well, I suppose there is no danger of your forgetting that tiresome fact, is there?" she answered laughing. "It is brought home to you tolerably vividly, I imagine. It's *horrid*, of course, for both of us; but there it is, and the sooner we face it and get over it the better."

I flung myself back with a sigh of despair. She was talking to me in riddles.

"For heaven's sake explain yourself," I exclaimed. "Tell me what you mean."

One would have thought the question was simple enough and needed no apology, but my young lady did not take it at all simply. She looked exceedingly angry, and cried hotly:

"I explain myself! I enter into meanings of things! Surely, Mr. Smith, you forget yourself. It is certainly for you, not for me to make explanations," and, biting her pretty under lip, she turned petulantly away and looked out of the window, with a deeply offended air.

I could make nothing of it; only I was miserable because I had annoyed her.

"Please forgive me," I murmured penitently; "I assure you I had no intention of vexing you."

She turned her head, mollified at once by my regretful tone.

"Well, let us say no more about it," she said hurriedly. "Here we are close to Shellerton, and papa will be on the platform. Whatever is to happen later, let us at all events begin by being good friends; it would look so bad to quarrel just at first, and it would cause poor papa so much annoyance."

She held out her hand in a friendly way, and I shook it heartily.

"Of course we will be good friends now and always," I answered cordially, and the answer seemed to please her, for she smiled at me and replied:

"That's right; stick to that, and then we shall not fall out again."

Five minutes later I found myself standing on the platform of Shellerton Station, with my worldly goods and chattels grouped around my feet, shaking hands with a very nice-looking old gentleman with iron-grey whiskers and a pleasant wrinkled old face.

"Fancy, papa, this is Mr. John Smith!" had been my fellow passenger's introduction; "I was in the same carriage, and we have made friends already."

"John Smith! are you really John Smith?" cried Mr. Hilton with absolute excitement.

With perfect truthfulness I replied that John Smith was indeed my name. Both my hands were immediately grasped and shaken with effusion.

"My dear, dear boy, how truly delighted I am to see you. Why did you not telegraph? Not that it matters, since I happen to be at the station; but if Ethel had not been coming down there might have been no carriage to meet you. However, 'all's well,' and a hearty welcome to you, my boy. Ah! you are like your father—his very image; the same blue eye, the same fine figure, the same bright, noble face and curly hair. I should have known you anywhere."

I must here pause to remark as a physiological curiosity that the power of the human imagination is absolutely illimitable. I endeavoured to blush modestly at the compliments that were being showered upon me, but fear that I only succeeded in looking sheepish.

"That monkey," continued my host, nudging me slyly and pointing to his daughter, who had gone off towards the barouche which was waiting outside the station, "that monkey thought you would not be good-looking enough for her, but I always told her, like father like son; if a man's a handsome fellow it stands to reason his son will be a handsome fellow too, and you see I was right, my boy, quite right."

Mr. Hilton seemed to be quite as much pleased with me as his daughter had been. It was very odd, but at the same time it was very agreeable.

Presently I found myself in the barouche bowling rapidly along through pleasant country lanes for about three or four miles until we reached the gates of a stately grey stone mansion, where a butler and two footmen hurried forward to meet us, and a courtesying housekeeper showed me into a spacious apartment, which from its size and position I rightly judged to be the best spare room of the whole house.

For the next three days I have but a bewildered recollection of the course of events; I only know that I was spoilt and made much of in a way that I had never before experienced in my whole life; that my lightest wish was forestalled, my every comfort studied with scrupulous exactitude. Every morning a splendid hunter stood at the door to carry me to hounds, a different one, let it be understood, every day, and I rode forth between my host and his beautiful daughter, and enjoyed the best of sport combined with the most delightful companionship, and every day I fell more deeply and overpoweringly in love with Ethel Hilton. I could look at nothing, think of nothing, see nothing but her. Whether she was cantering by my side in the faultlessly-made dark cloth habit with the bright colour and the wind-ruffled hair, or whether she was laughing to me across the dinner table in her pretty white evening dress, or singing some old ballad in the evening in the dreamy corner by the piano, she was always and ever absolutely and infinitely charming in every position of life. I had never been in love before; I was in love now wildly, de-

perately, madly in love. Sometimes in the glamour of it all I felt as if I could not be myself, as if what was happening to me was too good to be a living reality, and again and again in my sane moments I felt that I was living in a fool's paradise, and that there was something about it all that I could neither understand nor account for.

I do not mean to excuse myself. Of course I was doing wrong; of course I knew that there was something in the background which was a mystery and which would have to be cleared up some day; of course I knew that I was wilfully blinding myself and trying not to look before my nose. Sometimes this intuitive knowledge would obtrude itself upon me with an overwhelming force; as for instance when one evening after dinner Mr. Hilton asked me how I had liked India, and with a guilty knowledge of my duplicity I answered shortly, "Not at all," knowing very well that I had never been there, upon which Mr. Hilton, puffing away at his cigar, had replied:

"Well, I do not suppose you are the kind of man who would like it, but no doubt you have your theories upon Indian government and finance."

"Oh, plenty of them," I answered airily, and straightway I began to pour forth an epitome of my brother Ned's last letter upon the subject, he being a man of great experience and endless crochets on that topic. Mr. Hilton listened with much attention and infinite patience to my diatribe, and ended by declaring that he agreed with me fully and entirely upon every point I had touched upon.

I felt an awful traitor; but when immediately after we went into the drawing-room, and Ethel beckoned me with a smile to her side, she looked so lovely, and her beautiful eyes met mine with so melting a glance of love and confidence, that I felt that, traitor or no, I could not fling to the winds the position I began to feel sure I had won in her affections.

Things went on in this way for four days; there was no other guest staying in the house, and Christmas Eve arrived with no change or alteration in the current of our lives save that Ethel and I became more in love with each other every hour, for I felt certain by this time that my darling returned my affection.

Christmas Eve, after dinner, something happened which gave a new complexion to my wooing. When Mr. Hilton and I were left alone over our wine, the father of my beloved looking at me in a very straightforward manner said suddenly: "John"—he called me John in an almost fatherly manner—"John, don't you think it is about time we had this little matter settled?"

"Sir?" I faltered; not knowing in the least what he was alluding to. Uncertain what it was that he expected me to say, I remained silent, gazing down steadfastly at my wine glass. After a brief silence he resumed:

"I don't like shuffling or beating about the bush, John ; it isn't my way."

"Neither is it mine, Mr. Hilton—surely you must know that," and then I was silent again. My host was silent, too; but although I did not look at him, I felt that his eyes were fixed upon me anxiously and expectantly. There was something evidently which at this juncture it was apparently my bounden duty to say. What on earth could it be?

I racked my brains in vain—no solution would come to me save one so wild and so presumptuous that I would have died sooner than give the faintest hint of it. Still, it was clear that something must be said; only what in the name of Heaven ought it to be?

We both remained silent so long that at last the situation verged upon the ridiculous; in my despair I lifted my eyes and said quite piteously, "Mr. Hilton, I entreat you to assist me in my perplexity."

"No, no, John; that is impossible! I have done my share—now it is for you to do yours. I have given you plenty of time and opportunity; there is nothing now for you to do but to speak out."

Apparently. But what was I to speak about? there was the mischief of it.

By this time Mr. Hilton was looking at me quite sternly and disapprovingly. Seeing that I still remained hopelessly and helplessly tongue-tied he resumed with an accent of sorrowful displeasure:

"Your dear father, John, was of a more candid and open nature than you are; *he* would not have trifled at such a moment."

"For mercy's sake, Mr. Hilton!" I cried distractedly, "tell me what I am to say to you."

"The truth, sir—the truth at any cost," replied my host with a noble indignation burning in his keen and angry eyes.

"I have no other desire than to speak the truth, Mr. Hilton," I gasped; I really felt as if I was going to choke, "only—only——"

"Only the truth is apparently painful to you?" he inquired, coming unexpectedly to my assistance in a not unkindly manner, and adding soothingly: "if this is indeed so, do not be afraid to say so; of course it will be a bitter disappointment to me, but I shall know how to bear it with fortitude, only be honest with me."

I was more in the dark than ever.

"Sir, I would not cause you disappointment for the world after all your kindness to me—it would indeed be the basest ingratitude on my part." I really thought this was quite a safe, general sort of remark to make, it also had the merit of being strictly true. Nevertheless it was not taken in good part by my companion.

"Now, indeed, you are trifling!" he exclaimed indignantly and hotly; "to talk to me of 'kindness' or of 'ingratitude' is but a paltry evasion, a mere playing with the subject—it is trifling of the basest kind."

"I have no wish to trifle. I assure you, sir, nothing is further

from my thoughts than to trifle," I hastened to exclaim; for it was quite evident that "trifling," whatever that might be taken to mean, was in my friend's eyes an offence of the direst and blackest character. "I do not mean to trifle, I wish to be serious—very serious," I added after a moment's pause, seeing that the word somehow produced a mollifying effect upon him.

"I am glad of it, John, very glad," he said; "upon so serious a subject it is well to avoid levity. I am sure you must agree with me."

I assented eagerly; my conscience was free of blame, I was unaware of having entertained any sensations of levity. "Agony," indeed, would more fitly describe my state of mind.

As it seemed that it was the right thing to be serious I thought I could not do better than continue to harp upon the same string.

"I never was more serious in my life," I exclaimed; "in point of fact I am far too serious. I should be a lighter-hearted man could I be less serious."

This also was perfectly true.

But it seems that I now overshot the mark. How hard it is to do exactly the right thing in this world!

Mr. Hilton rose from his chair and began pacing the room in evident and uncontrollable agitation.

"Ah, then, it is as I feared," he muttered brokenly; "the hopes of a lifetime are destined to be shattered—and I had believed, yes, firmly believed, that all was going to turn out well. My friend," turning round and standing still before my chair, "I can only thank you for your considerate candour and for your honesty."

I murmured a modest disclaimer.

"Of course I see that it was a very delicate and difficult thing for you to tell me, but I understand your reluctance and appreciate your hesitation—you need not say another word—I see it all, and deeply as I deplore your decision I can of course only applaud your honesty—for such a subject does not admit of anything but the absolute truth. I can only repeat that I regret that it cannot be, for I like you, John Smith—I like you very much indeed, for your own sake as well as your father's; I should have liked it to be, but as it is impossible I can only say that it is better to be frank and to say so at once. I suppose you would like to go away to-morrow morning?" he inquired in a calm and off-hand manner.

My jaw fell—literally, my jaw fell!

"Go away—to-morrow morning?" I repeated blankly; "go away—to-morrow—Christmas Day?"

"Yes; to be sure it is Christmas Day!" he replied unconcernedly, "but," reaching his hand out for a "Bradshaw" that lay on a side table hard by, "the trains are the same as on Sunday, and there is a good Sunday morning train from Shellerton at 9.40. You could breakfast in your room and get off quietly without seeing Ethel—it will be better so."

"Mr. Hilton, now, indeed, you are cruel to me," I cried with great agitation; "why are you turning me out of your house, on Christmas Day of all days of the year, too? What have I done to deserve such treatment? and why may I not see Eth—your daughter again? Why do you treat me so harshly?"

Mr. Hilton looked at me through his eye-glasses, over the top of the "Bradshaw" in his hand, wonderingly and curiously, as though I had been a new species of animal.

"Bless my soul! the man must be mad!" he ejaculated, "how *can* you remain in my house after what you have just told me, sir? how *can* you be permitted to subject my daughter to the humiliation of your presence, when you have just this very minute declined to marry her?"

I sprang to my feet as if I had been shot.

"Declined to marry her?—to marry Ethel? Good God! what on earth can you be dreaming about? I *decline* to marry Ethel! when it is the very dearest wish of my heart, the most intense hope of my whole being to win her for my wife! Mr. Hilton, it is you who must be mad—absolutely stark, staring mad!"

I really did not know any longer what I was saying. I tore wildly across the room between the fireplace and the windows, uttering broken ejaculations of despair, intermingled with the outpourings of my wounded and injured affections.

Suddenly I felt myself arrested, grasped by both arms, and brought to a standstill in my headlong career upon the middle of the hearthrug.

"John—my dear, dear boy, is it possible that I have misunderstood you entirely? that I am labouring under a strange delusion?"

"Yes—yes; indeed you are!" I cried. Of that there was no sort of doubt whatever, although what the exact nature of the delusion was I really could not determine.

"Then you do not altogether dislike my Ethel?"

"Dislike her! Great heavens, Mr. Hilton! have you not seen that I adore the very ground she stands upon?"

"Then why on earth should you have hesitated to say so, my dear boy? In fact why have you not spoken long ago? Why did you wait for *me* to open the subject?"

"Mr. Hilton, how could I speak so soon? how could I tell how you—how *she* would receive my bold and presumptuous hopes?"

Mr. Hilton laughed pleasantly. "Oh, as to me, I think you know *my* wishes well enough—they coincide of course with my duty—and as to Ethel, why, she has looked upon herself as your betrothed wife ever since your father died."

This was a new feature of the case indeed. I stared at him speechlessly.

"Of course she knew that she was destined for you, and was prepared to receive you as her lover—only one cannot force

people's inclinations in this enlightened century, so that it was necessary that you should spend a few days together so as to see whether you could hit it off: if you had not liked her you were bound to retire; or if she had not liked you it would have become my duty to tell you so."

"And—and—does she like me?" I asked tremblingly.

Mr. Hilton laughed. "Aha! sly dog! as if you didn't know! *does* she like you? Go and ask her, sir. Pity you have not asked her sooner say I. Go and ask her, my boy; go and ask her," and taking me by the shoulders he pushed me playfully out of the door into the hall, closing the door of the dining-room upon himself so as to shut me outside.

I stood for a moment with my hands up to my head. I felt almost stunned with the strangeness of my position and bewildered with the magnitude of my good fortune. What did it all mean? Who and what did Mr. Hilton take me for? What incomprehensible mystery lay in the background behind all this?

I could not tell. I did not know, nor did I wish to know. Why should I desire to pry into what was so fair from the outside? I heard the tinkle of Ethel's piano across the hall. No doubt she was waiting for me; wondering why I had stayed away so long to-night! With hasty steps I crossed the hall and opened the drawing-room door, closing it quickly behind me so that she could see at once that her father was not following me, and that I had come to her alone.

She half rose from the piano, the roseate lamp light fell upon her sweet face and upon the white folds of her dress. In two seconds I was by her side, and I hardly know what I did or what I said; only that when I could speak again she was in my arms, her dear head upon my shoulder and her beating heart clasped against my own.

"So you really do love me, my darling?" I murmured ecstatically.

"You've been a very long time waiting to ask me," she answered with a little saucy toss of her chin.

"A long time! Why, Ethel, I only wonder at my own presumption in daring to ask you so soon; at my good fortune in becoming your accepted lover already," I cried, for really it did seem hard to be accused of backwardness after a four days' acquaintance.

"Oh, but, Jack," she answered resting her head fondly against my shoulder, "is not our case different to that of all other lovers?"

I have often been told that this delusion is shared by each successive couple of lovers all over the world, so her question did not surprise me, indeed, being very much in love with her, I thought it a very sweet and bewitching remark to make. I murmured a fond assent and clasped her more closely to my heart.

"You see," she continued, "you and I have been just made for one another"—this also I thought I had read in some novel not long before—"does it not seem to you as if we had known each

other for years ; as if our souls had been together, our lives only tending towards one another, awaiting in a sort of blessed expectancy until the happy moment came that was to bring us together ? ”

I have always remarked that Ethel is very sentimental, all nice women are I think. I could not conscientiously say that I had experienced all this myself, and I said so, politely of course, but still unmistakably.

“ I don't think, dearest, that I have been given to as many dreams of that kind as you have. You see I have had work to do in the world. I don't, to speak honestly, believe I ever gave it much thought until the moment I met you.”

She looked so grieved that I hastened to add, “ Although of course I knew there was a dear little wife waiting for me somewhere in the world.”

The happy look came back into her pretty face. We sat down on the sofa together and proceeded to make ourselves very comfortable in a thoroughly lover-like manner.

“ The only thing I regret,” she said presently, “ is, that we should have waited so long. If I had seen you when I was eighteen I should have liked you just as much. It was papa, you know, who insisted that you were not to see me till I was twenty-one—that was his doing.”

This remark set me thinking so hard that I could not speak for a few minutes.

At last I said something I did not quite mean to have said.

“ Ethel, are you *quite* sure that you ever heard of me before I came down here ? ” I asked her gravely.

“ Heard of you ? you foolish boy ! I have heard of nobody else, I think,” she cried, laughing merrily.

“ But always from your father only ? ”

“ Oh dear no, I have heard a great deal about you from Kate Ridway, that girl who was on the platform at Euston, you know.”

“ Kate *Ridway* ! ” I repeated in surprise, “ not surely the sister of——”

“ Yes, the sister of your great friend Mr. Walter Ridway ; he was hunting down here two years ago. Unluckily at the time we never found out that he knew you, although he dined here several times ; it was only after he went away that Kate, who is my greatest friend, mentioned one day that her brother's greatest friend was John Smith. You may imagine how excited and interested I was and how many questions I asked about you.”

“ I don't know Miss Kate Ridway.”

“ No, I know you don't, but she has heard all about you from her brother Walter, who does nothing but sing your praises. I used to pretend to Kate that I was sure I should not like you, or that you would not like me ; but she always told me she thought me a very lucky girl, for that you were a delightful person ; and she was quite right, for so you are, darling.”

After that speech what could a man in my position do but accept the goods the gods provided for him with a thankful heart and with a determination to enjoy without any *arrière pensée* all the blessings which an astonishingly bountiful fortune had flung with a curious persistence at my head ever since the fortuitous moment when I had taken my first-class ticket to Shellerton at the Euston Terminus!

That Christmas Day will long be remembered by me as the most wonderful and memorable day of my whole life.

We walked to church together—my love and I and my future father-in-law. After breakfast he had said to me smilingly:

"To-morrow morning, my dear John, you and I must go into ways and means together; I have written to Mr. Close, my solicitor, to be here at eleven o'clock with all the necessary documents, to meet you."

"Certainly, Mr. Hilton—I am prepared of course to do my utmost——"

"Hush! hush! not a word now," cried the old man holding up his hand. "I forbid you to mention the subject to-day. To-day, my dear boy, is Christmas Day, and on this 'day of days' I desire that no worldly considerations shall spoil your happiness. Oh! John, I only wish your dear father were with us; that alone is wanting to make our joy complete; how blessed this Christmas Day would have been to him!"

"I am sure, sir, my poor father would have been very glad if he could have seen me to-day and have welcomed Ethel as a daughter," I replied truthfully.

"Yes, he would indeed; the dream of his life, poor dear fellow, and he never lived to see it! Ah, well! I will not sadden you by speaking of him; but of course to me, in my old age, he is powerfully present on this eventful day."

I held my tongue discreetly, for I confess I could not imagine why my poor old father should have been so specially rejoiced at my engagement to Ethel, although no doubt he would have given us his blessing; but he would not, I am sure, have waited till the morrow to inquire what amount of fortune she was likely to inherit, for he had been a practical and business-like man, far more so than I was. The measure of his gratification at the match would no doubt have depended a good deal upon the sum which old Hilton was prepared to put down; whereas I can honestly say that I really had hardly given the subject a thought; save that as the only child of a rich man, I was of course conscious that she could not be actually penniless.

Well, the day passed as Mr. Hilton had desired that it should, in calm and tranquil happiness. We went to church together, we knelt side-by-side and sang out of one hymn book, then came lunch and a long ramble alone with Ethel through the least-frequented country lanes we could select, then when we came in

a little pottering about the gardens and stables before it was time to dress for dinner. At dinner Mr. Hilton requested me to carve the turkey. My dreams of mutton cutlets and savoury omelette were of course, by the force of circumstances, dashed to the earth, and I sat down meekly and orthodoxly to roast turkey and plum-pudding with a calm resignation quite beautiful to behold. There were also mince-pies at that repast and a new Stilton cheese, and some hot sweet biscuits were handed round afterwards in the shape of small boxes which were called "mangers," in allusion, I imagine, to some of the religious rites of the day, and which Ethel forced me to partake of although I must confess they were excessively nasty; it required several glasses of my host's excellent old port wine to wash out the taste of them.

Dinner over, we adjourned to the drawing-room; Mr. Hilton drew his arm-chair up to the fire, unfolded his *Field* and buried his head between its pages.

"Don't mind *me*, young people," he said to us considerately, and it must be admitted that we took him very literally at his word; we didn't mind him in the very least. We sat in the shadowy corner by the piano and were supremely and sublimely happy. Sometimes Ethel sang a verse of a song or played a little tune, but the song generally broke down, and the tune ended oddly in the middle of a bar, and all sorts of happy follies were said and done during that blessed hour.

All at once Ethel lifted up her head and said, "Hush, I hear carriage wheels coming up the drive."

"Impossible, at this hour and on this day."

"Oh, but I *do*," she cried, and sure enough a carriage drove up close outside and the door-bell rang loudly.

Mr. Hilton started up in his chair.

"Good gracious! who on earth can it be?" he cried; "visitors at such an hour."

"It must be a mistake," murmured Ethel apprehensively.

Footsteps were heard in the hall outside—voices, too, as if some sort of discussion were going on between the servants and the intruders.

The suspense did not last long. The door was suddenly thrown wide open. We saw a gentleman with a red beard advancing across the hall towards us, and the butler said in a remarkably clear and distinct voice:

"Mr. John Smith."

If a thunderbolt had fallen in our midst it could not have produced a greater effect upon us. Mr. Hilton turned as white as ashes; his mouth fell open, he looked bewilderedly and rapidly first at the new comer, then at me, then back again at him. Ethel uttered a low cry and sprang to her feet, while as to me, my heart gave one wild thump and then stood absolutely stock still within me.

Meanwhile the gentleman just announced came smilingly forward and extended a somewhat red and bony hand towards Mr. Hilton. He was a thin, ill-made man, with stooping shoulders and a narrow chest; his complexion was sallow and unwholesome; his eyes appeared to be weak and short-sighted, and he wore a long and ill-kempt tawny red beard. His clothes were badly made and badly fitting, and he had in addition an underbred and unctuous appearance, which produced a strong feeling of disgust in my mind as I surveyed him. There was, however, no lack of assurance in his aspect, nor in the airy and confident manner in which he addressed Mr. Hilton.

"At last I have been able to get away, dear sir," he said blandly, "and to avail myself of your many kind and hospitable invitations."

"Sir, I am at a loss——" began the old man hesitatingly. "Did I hear your name aright, sir?"

"Certainly, certainly, my good friend, and believe me, I should but for the pressure of business have been here in time to join your family circle around the festive Christmas board. However, I well know that I am welcome, even at this late hour. I come here, in fact, with the confidence of a son to a father's house to claim at your hands the sweet bride who has awaited my coming. Ah! I see her sitting here. Allow me, my dearest young lady, whose beauty indeed I perceive has not been over-rated, allow me to——" Here the wretch advanced with outstretched hands to where Ethel was standing. What he intended to do or to say I cannot say, for she, like a frightened deer, fled precipitately at his approach and took refuge by me on the further side of the table.

Mr. Hilton was by this time gasping for breath.

"What is the meaning of this: who are you? What is your business here?" And then, as though a sudden thought had struck him with a crushing force, he turned round upon me, whilst his arm swayed heavily up and down as he pointed at me. "And great heavens! who—who—who, then, is *this* man?"

The poor old man was purple in the face. I really thought he was going to have a fit.

Hereupon Mr. John Smith—not me, the other one—very deliberately took a pair of spectacles out of his pocket, wiped them carefully with a yellow silk handkerchief and placed them on his nose. Then he favoured me with a steady and prolonged stare.

"I am not able to tell you who that gentleman is, Mr. Hilton. I have never to my knowledge seen him before," he said with an irritating calmness. "But I have no difficulty in enlightening you with regard to myself. I am John Smith, the son of your old friend, who by a mutual arrangement between you and him is destined to become your daughter's husband upon her attaining the age of twenty-one, in order that the two fortunes which you and my lamented father accumulated side by side should be united upon

our marriage. This, I believe, was exactly as the matter was stated in my father's will. I have therefore presented myself, according to this agreement, at the earliest date, consistent with the claims of business, after the twenty-first birthday of your daughter, which occurred on the fifteenth day of November last, in order to claim her as my promised wife."

Ethel shuddered violently and hid her face against my coat-sleeve. As to Mr. Hilton, he turned and looked at me. I could scarcely face the anger and indignation in his eyes.

"And you, then, are an impostor, sir," he said with a bitter scorn; "you who have passed yourself off for another man! May I inquire who, and what are you?"

At this Ethel wound both her arms through mine and leant close up against me. This gave me a great deal of courage, which might otherwise have failed me.

"I am John Smith too, sir," I answered as composedly as I could. "I am sorry if there has been a mistake about me, but I have never pretended to be what I am not."

"Resign all claims to my child at once, sir," cried the old man angrily.

"Certainly not, Mr. Hilton; I shall do nothing of the sort. I am a gentleman, and I am also a barrister in good practice. I am perfectly able to support a wife in every comfort. So that if Ethel chooses to marry me in preference to this other gentleman, whom I have fortunately forestalled, I do not see what is to prevent her marriage——"

"And I do choose to marry him, papa," here burst forth Ethel impetuously. "To begin with, I love him, and to go on with, I don't love this other Mr. John Smith; and what is more, I never could love him if I were to try from now till next year. He is not at all the sort of person I could ever take a fancy to, and *my* John Smith *is*, and I mean to marry him. Not all the fathers, dead or alive, in the whole world could make me change my mind. I really think that the other Mr. Smith had better go away," she added plaintively; "he has made us all feel very uncomfortable and we shall be much happier without him."

And go he did; back to the station in the fly that had brought him, for there was no use in trying to mend matters after such a speech as that.

Well, in time Mr. Hilton recovered and forgave me and became reconciled to our marriage, for he really liked me, and I do not think he would ever have taken to that other fellow.

I am married to Ethel now, and Mr. Hilton is very fond of me, although he often shakes his head and says reproachfully:

"But you are not *my* John Smith, Jack; you are not my dear old friend's son, you know. I cannot forget that."

"Neither can I forget, sir," I answer laughingly, "that when you first saw me you swore I was the very living image of him."

THE SWEETEST GIFT.

By DORA RUSSELL,

AUTHOR OF "FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW," "THE BROKEN SEAL,"
"HIDDEN IN MY HEART," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE BEST-LOOKING ONE.

LADY BARBARA BIDDULPH, a woman well advanced in middle age; a woman shrewd of tongue, and sharp of temper, was sitting one morning fuming and pondering over a letter that the post had just brought her, when her companion Miss Woodville entered the room, with a smile on her face and a blush on her faded cheeks.

"Are you engaged, Lady Barbara," she asked in a pleasant voice, "or can I speak to you for a few minutes?"

"What do you want?" answered Lady Barbara tartly, looking up from her letter; "if it's any nonsense don't bother me with it just now."

"Perhaps you may call it nonsense," said the companion rather demurely, though still with a smile, for she was accustomed to Lady Barbara's ways.

"What is it then? I suppose I must hear?"

"Well—the truth is, Lady Barbara—I am going to leave you."

"Going to leave me!" cried Lady Barbara, throwing the letter on the table before her. "Are you mad? What crotchet have you got into your head now, that you talk of leaving a home like this? Where will you get such another I should like to know?"

"Indeed I have nothing to complain of—but I think I should tell you, Mr. Sinton, the vicar, has asked me to marry him, and I have written to accept his proposal."

"Mr. Sinton asked you to marry him!" repeated Lady Barbara, starting to her feet in indignation. "I suppose you know what that means? He wants you to be head-nurse to his seven motherless children—nothing more nor less, I assure you. Are you prepared to have relays of whooping-cough, measles and scarlet-fever under your charge for the next ten or fifteen years—I simply ask you *that*?"

"I hope I am prepared to do all I can to help a good man," answered Miss Woodville with some spirit.

"A good man!" said Lady Barbara sarcastically, "I should like to know where you will find one? But I suppose like all silly women you want to be married; you are willing to give up an excellent home where you have every comfort, and go to an uncomfortable one, for

the sake of saying you have a husband? But you'll repent it; take my word for it, you'll repent it to the last day of your life."

Lady Barbara, or as she was commonly called Lady Bab, began walking hastily up and down the room in her anger, glancing occasionally, with contempt in her keen grey eyes at her meek-faced companion. But she had a good heart, and presently her expression softened. Perhaps she was remembering the days when she too had chosen to have a husband and had accepted old General Biddulph, very much for the same reason that she was now taunting Miss Woodville with.

"Well, I suppose," she said presently in a milder tone, "you expect me to wish you joy?"

"I hope you will do so, Lady Barbara."

"It's the strangest thing," continued Lady Bab, going back to the table and taking up the letter she had flung down on hearing Miss Woodville's news. "Read this—if you are really going to be so silly, perhaps this will just fit in?"

Miss Woodville took the letter and read it gravely. It was the saddest letter; written by a widow in the first dark hours of her bitter bereavement.

"DEAR LADY BARBARA,

"I have no right, I know, to write to you, nor to trouble you with an account of the terrible blow that has fallen on us; but I remember how kind you were always to me in the old days when I was at Lord Kingston's, and so I find courage to address you. My dear, dear husband died a fortnight ago—and oh! Lady Barbara, I can scarcely tell you how he died. We were always so happy, and he was so good to me and the girls, that it makes the shock a hundred times more dreadful to bear. But he had speculated, and got into great difficulties, and to my anguish and horror, he shot himself, and left me a widow, and his children fatherless. I have three girls, and we are totally unprovided for. Could you in your great kindness of heart do something for one of the girls? I mean, could you find her some situation as a companion or governess? Sihyl, my second daughter, seems to feel the blow most, and I am very uneasy about her. If you will help us I shall always pray God to bless you.

"Very sincerely yours,

"ELIZABETH SELBY."

This letter, which Miss Woodville read with a sympathetic heart, was written by a lady whom Lady Barbara Biddulph had known for many years. She had been the governess of Lord Kingston's children, and Lord Kingston was Lady Barbara's brother.

When pretty Elizabeth May married Mr. Selby, who was supposed to be a flourishing lawyer in the big, bustling northern town of Rochland, every one, including her employer Lord Kingston, said what a good marriage she had made. And so it

seemed for many years. Mr. Selby lived in a good house, and kept a good establishment, and was an open-handed genial man, always glad and happy to have his friends around him. And as years rolled on the pretty prattling children of the household grew into womanhood, and people said they were the handsomest girls in Rochland, and that Sibyl, the second daughter, was the beauty of them all.

She had had many lovers when the cruel blow fell which left them without father or home. And there was one lover—the one lover whom she had ever loved—to whom she was absolutely engaged to at this time, and with a trembling hand, and bitter, bitter, grief in her heart, she had written to Captain Noel Jervis to set him free.

There had been a little romance already about these two, for Captain Jervis was a poor highly-connected man, and the daughter of a lawyer in a provincial town, even in Mr. Selby's palmy days, was scarcely a fitting match for him. But they had met first at balls and parties, and then often in the low-lying meadow-lands, through which the river Roch crept on its sluggish way. And gradually there had grown between them a deep and passionate love. Noel Jervis knew this and Sibyl knew it, yet he had struggled with his feelings, telling himself it was but sweet madness; that he had nothing to offer the girl; that he must try to forget her.

Then his regiment was ordered to leave Rochland, to proceed to India. This brought the affair to a crisis. Sibyl's cheeks were pale, and there was sharp anguish in her heart, but she hid this as best she could. But one day wandering restlessly near their old trysting-place by the Roch, Captain Jervis unexpectedly came on Sibyl, whose sweet face was wet and stained with tears.

This was more than he had strength to bear. He sat down beside her; he told her in a few simple words that he loved her; that he was too poor to marry at present; but would she wait for him? Would she be his wife in happier days?

Then the girl raised her glad eyes to his face and whispered her answer. She would wait years and years. She did not care how many years, she told him, and as Jervis clasped her to his breast, he said he was, and thought himself, a happy man.

But the hours that they spent together dreaming of the future were very brief. A week after their engagement Captain Jervis' regiment left Rochland, and Sibyl Selby had only the memory of her love to console her, and the photograph of the handsome soldier to whom she was betrothed.

And she lived on this memory. She was a girl with strong deep feelings, and she had given Jervis her whole heart. And when the blow came that crushed them all so low her first thought was of her absent lover.

Mrs. Selby's letter to Lady Barbara Biddulph had not indeed told all the sad truth. Mr. Selby had taken money intrusted to his care, and there was shame, as well as pain and sorrow, left for his portionless children. And when Sibyl heard this she told

herself she was bound in honour to release Jervis from his engagement. She did this, and endured after she had written the letter such intense anxiety and pain that no wonder her mother told Lady Barbara she was uneasy about her child.

And as Miss Woodville laid the poor widow's letter down, Lady Barbara once more took it up.

"One of these girls might suit me," she said after reading it again. "But," she added, looking sharply at her companion, "are you really going to make a fool of yourself?"

"If you mean," said Miss Woodville, with a good-tempered laugh, "am I really going to marry Mr. Sinton, I really am?"

"Then reach me some telegraph forms," commanded Lady Bab, in her imperious way, and her companion having done so, she sent the following telegram to Mrs. Selby at Rochland:

"I will take one of your girls for a time; send me the best-looking one, and the one who reads best."

CHAPTER II.

SIBYL.

THESE words went to a sad household; a household absolutely in need of daily bread. Mr. Selby had died owing thousands and thousands of pounds, and perhaps naturally when the first shock of his death was over his creditors were not very tender to his memory. They had lived completely beyond their means, one angry man said to the other, and even the poor girls came in for their share of blame.

There was one debt that Sibyl owed that almost killed her to think of. When Captain Jervis was leaving Rochland she had given him a valuable diamond ring which she had not paid for at the time, intending to do so out of her allowance when he was gone; for what need would she have for finery she told herself when her Noel was away. And now the jeweller had applied for this debt and Sibyl had nothing to give him. The man was civil enough; he said he would rather take back the ring if he could not get the money, but Sibyl had written to him that she would pay him if he would give her a little time.

Therefore when Lady Barbara's telegram arrived, the half-broken-hearted girl at once said she would accept her offer.

"Well, you are the best-looking, Sibyl," sighed the sad mother.

"It is not that," answered Sibyl, "but I must make some money; in London I could do many things, paint fans and cards, and perhaps for your sake Lady Barbara will help me."

It was soon settled after this, and a few days later, one mild spring evening, about seven o'clock, a black-robed girl, with a pale sweet face, was ushered into Lady Barbara's drawing-room.

Lady Barbara lived in one of the small streets leading out of

Park Lane, and she was a woman well off in the world. She had a small house in town and a small house at Brighton, and a small house in a pretty Devonshire village called Rainton, the vicar of this place being now going to marry her companion, Miss Woodville.

And as the black-robed girl entered her drawing-room Lady Barbara rose and held out her hand.

"How are you, my dear?" she said kindly, for there was something in Sibyl's face that took her fancy. "Don't begin to talk now; I shall hear all about your poor mother and your home news afterwards. Woodville, get her some tea—how slow you are! I declare I believe you think of nothing now but that vicar of yours and his numerous progeny!"

Lady Bab was always scolding poor Woodville, but somehow she never scolded Sibyl. From the first she took to the young girl, and did her best to cheer and amuse her.

"Woodville is an old goose, you know, to marry this man;" she told Sibyl privately, "but all the same she has been with me seventeen years, so I intend to give her her trousseau as she calls it, and a silver tea-pot before she goes away. Trousseau, indeed! at her age, but some women always make fools of themselves, and Woodville is one of them."

Nevertheless Lady Bab was very kind to Woodville, and gave her many things beside the "silver tea-pot" which she had promised her. And she also gave the wedding breakfast, though she could not restrain her sarcastic tongue about "the young pair."

The wedding and the excitement served to distract a little the consuming anxiety that was preying on Sibyl Selby's health. Each day now she expected an answer to her letter to Captain Jervis, in which she had released him from his engagement, and hope and fear by turns filled her heart. Would he take her at her word? Ah, with what passionate longing and tears Sibyl prayed that he would not!

The letter came at last—too soon, too soon! In sorrowful, regretful, and tender words Captain Jervis told her he supposed her decision was the wisest one; that his own position was bad; that he had debts and a mother whom he was obliged partly to support; that it must have been years and years before they could have thought of marrying. "But I shall never forget you, Sibyl," he added, "and for your sweet sake may I keep the ring which you gave me as a token of our love?"

These last words (the one little bit of consolation to poor Sibyl's breaking heart) aroused great indignation in her family. For when Sibyl was forced to tell her sisters that Captain Jervis had accepted her release, Bessie Selby, the eldest girl, wrote at once to say that she hoped that he had sent back the diamond engagement ring.

"I shall think it is quite dishonest if he has not," wrote Bessie; "and I am obliged, Sibyl, candidly to tell you that Mr. Hawes, the jeweller, says he must have either the ring or the money."

Then Sibyl, in her despair and anguish, did what she never thought she could have found courage to do. She went to Lady Barbara and told her the whole story, only suppressing Captain Jervis' name.

"Oh! Lady Barbara!" prayed the poor girl, with streaming eyes and faltering tongue, "will you lend me this money? If you will, I shall work for you all my life without pay—I shall do anything for you—but, but spare me this!"

"I think he is a mean hound," answered plain-tongued Lady Bab, "to break off his engagement, but all the same I can understand your feelings. Yes, my dear, you shall have the money—fifty pounds, is it? All right, you shall have it to-day; but don't break your heart for a worthless man."

And Sibyl bent down and kissed Lady Bab's bony, jewelled hand.

"I would give my life to save yours," she said, in her tearful gratitude; and the old lady patted her shoulder, and told her not to be a little fool.

And the money for the ring was paid, and Sibyl tried for Lady Barbara's sake to hide her bitter pain. Then the season commenced, and Lady Barbara's friends came up to town, and her little drawing-room was often full of visitors. And among these visitors came her niece, Miss Melicent Penny.

"My sister," Lady Barbara told Sibyl, "chose to marry James Penny, the rich brewer, and he has left my niece a great fortune. They made her father into a baronet before he died, but they did not make him into a gentleman! Melicent is a tall, fine girl, and has two hundred thousand pounds, so they call her a beauty, but she isn't and never will be."

This was a very true description of Miss Melicent Penny. She was a tall, fine girl, and nothing more. She had irregular features, and there was some consciousness of her great wealth in her manner.

"You remind me of your father, my dear," Lady Bab used sometimes to say to her spitefully; and the heiress did not like to hear this, and confided to Sibyl, "that certainly Aunt Bab was the most disagreeable old woman" she knew.

All the same, she liked to be seen with "Aunt Bab," occasionally, and was very pressing with her profuse hospitality to her relation.

"You must come to me at Christmas," she told Lady Barbara, near the close of the season. "And you, too, Miss Selby? I intend to have lots of fun, and Pennythorne Hall is such a beautiful place—I don't suppose you ever saw such a house before."

"There is a chance for you, Sibyl," said Lady Bab dryly.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTMAS AT PENNYTHORNE.

THERE followed Sibyl to Brighton, when she went there in the autumn with Lady Barbara, a small packet, and when she opened

this she found it contained the diamond ring she had given to Captain Jervis and which Lady Barbara had paid for.

There was no letter with the ring, nor message. But there the glittering thing lay glittering before her, to remind her of her lost happiness. It was like the re-opening of an old wound, and cost Sibyl days and days of cruel pain. The packet was addressed in Captain Jervis' own handwriting, and bore the Indian post-mark. He was still in India then, the poor girl thought, and had sent back her ring as a token that he had forgotten her.

But she did not tell even Lady Barbara that he had returned it. She hid it silently away, just as she tried to hide her bitter disappointment. She knew the world scoffs at broken hearts and blighted affections, and she did not care to be its jest.

They stayed all the autumn at Brighton, and then on the 23rd of December started for Pennythorne Hall to spend the Christmas. It was quite true what Melicent Penny had told Sibyl, for she had never been in such a house before. A great, vast house, with turrets and battlements and wings and fronts, until it was actually bewildering. It was magnificently furnished also, and now decorated with holly and mistletoe, and quite a large party were staying in the house; and when Lady Barbara and Sibyl arrived half-a-dozen young people were drinking tea round a big glowing fire in the hall. Melicent went forward and welcomed her aunt and her companion, and introduced them to some of her friends.

"The men will be here presently," she said in her careless way. "The hounds met to-day, and Captain Jervis and some of the others are out."

Sibyl felt the blood rush to her face at the sound of the old familiar name, but the next minute told herself how foolish it was, that there might be many Captain Jervis's, that she must learn to hear the name without shrinking. But some ten minutes later one or two pink-coated men entered the hall, and among them, with a sudden spasm at her heart, a sudden flood of overwhelming emotion, Sibyl recognized Noel Jervis. He never saw her. Melicent was calling for liqueurs and brandy and soda, was laughing and jesting; and the trembling girl stood back in the shade, and her old lover did not even look at her. And when they went upstairs to dress for dinner Melicent followed her aunt and Sibyl to their rooms.

"Did you notice that tall man," she said to Sibyl, "with grey eyes, in the hall? That is Captain Noel Jervis, and I have promised to marry him. He is very good-looking, isn't he?"

Sibyl tried to speak, but her tongue failed her. But Melicent never noticed her emotion; she was too much taken up with herself and her engagement to heed the feelings of her aunt's companion. She prattled on about this and that, and then when she went away Sibyl sank down upon her knees and prayed for strength to bear this last and bitterest blow.

It was at the long and gorgeous dinner-table that Noel Jervis' eyes

first fell on Sibyl's sweet face. He stared at her; he could not believe in the evidence of his own senses. He was sitting by the side of his betrothed, Miss Melicent Penny, and in a strangely altered voice he asked her who the girl was in white with black ribbons.

"Oh, that's my aunt, Lady Barbara Biddulph's companion," answered Melicent; "her name is Sibyl Selby; she is rather pretty, isn't she?"

But Captain Jervis expressed no opinion. A hundred tender recollections were sweeping over his heart like a deep flood. He remembered Sibyl's parting kiss, her tearful expressions of regret and love. Only the strongest reasons would have induced him to give his consent to the cancelling of their engagement, but his own poverty and Sibyl's seemed to make the marriage impossible. Now his circumstances were slightly changed, for a distant relative had left him a small legacy. And as he looked from Sibyl to the girl to whom he was now betrothed, he knew to which woman his heart was true, and that he had made a fatal mistake.

When the men returned to the drawing-room, he went up to Sibyl, shook hands with her, and sat down by her side.

"This is a strange meeting," he said in a low tone.

"Yes," answered Sibyl with quivering lips.

"You are not looking very strong, have you not been well?"

"We—we have gone through so much," faltered Sibyl; and Lady Barbara, who was watching these two with her keen eyes, began to wonder if this was the man for whose ring she had paid.

Presently Melicent Penny came up to them, and touched Jervis, shoulder with her big fan.

"Come and dance," she said; "the ball-room is open."

The ball-room adjoined the drawing-room, and already some young couples were dancing a waltz.

"Will you dance this dance with me?" asked Jervis, looking at Sibyl.

"This dance?" she hesitated, for she saw that Melicent expected to dance with her betrothed.

"Yes," said Jervis briefly, and he offered Sibyl his arm, and led her away.

And for the next few minutes the old sweet madness, the old fond love made them both forget all else. As he clasped her closely in his arms Jervis bent over Sibyl's forehead, and whispered a few passionate words in her ear:

"Why did you write that letter, Sibyl—the letter that parted us?"

"I had no choice; it was the one thing honour left me to do," answered the girl with heaving breast.

"I wish to heaven it had been left undone!"

"And you," said Sibyl, as they stopped to breathe; "why did you send back the ring, Noel, you had asked to keep?"

A curious expression passed over Captain Jervis' face.

"I might have known," he muttered, "fool that I was. You

did not know then, Sibyl, of the letter your sister, Bessie, wrote to me?" he asked the next moment.

"That Bessie wrote to you! I knew of no letter."

"She wrote me a very insulting letter, and told me that as I had been mean enough to break off my engagement because you had become poor, she hoped at least I would not be mean enough to keep the valuable ring you had given me, as I could not wish to do so really for anything but its intrinsic worth."

"Oh! Noel, what you must have thought?"

"But for this letter I should never have asked another woman to be my wife."

The music was going on, and the dancing; they looked in each others' faces, and went on dancing too, but somehow a great weight seemed to have been lifted off poor Sibyl's heart. He had not forgotten her then; he loved her still.

* * * * *

That night, when the ladies retired to their bedrooms, Lady Barbara called her young companion into her room. Lady Barbara was attired in a long, white dressing-gown when Sibyl went in, with a flush on her sweet face, and a light in her eyes, that Lady Bab had never seen there before.

"Come here, child," said Lady Bab, who was standing with her back to the large blazing fire, "and tell me what you think of Melicent's fine lover—so, it seems he is an old friend of yours?"

"Yes," said Sibyl with faltering tongue.

"Not the man," began Lady Bab, jerking her spare person from side to side in her energy to learn the truth; "not the man, I hope, who——"

But the next moment she gave a shrill cry! A tongue of flame from the fire had caught her dimity dressing-gown, and in an instant ran on in its consuming way. A moment later, it was mounting to her grey head. But with a cry, too, Sibyl, thoughtless of her own uncovered neck and arms, had sprung to her assistance. The girl caught up the hearth-rug, and wrapped it round her old friend; she crushed out the flames with her gloved hands, forgetful almost of the sharp stings of agony, as they licked her own white skin. But she must save Lady Barbara! That was her one thought, and she did save her. The burnt dressing-gown lay on the floor; Lady Barbara stood gasping, but not much injured, when Sibyl perceived her own white muslin gown was on fire!

Then she lost her presence of mind. With a shriek she opened the room door and ran screaming along the corridor. There was a man coming up the broad staircase; he saw her, and caught her in his arms, and flung her down. It all took very few minutes. But Sibyl saw who it was who had torn off his own coat, and wrapped her in it; who was clasping her closely, crushing out the flames with his hands. It was her old lover, Noel Jervis, and as she knew this, the bitterness of death seemed gone.

"I would rather die, Noel," she murmured, as in frantic terms of endearment and tenderness, he told her she was saved, "for I have suffered so much. oh! so much!"

* * * * *

They carried her to her own room, and Lady Bab and the hastily-summoned doctor and nurse were all that were allowed to stay. She was terribly burned, her lovely neck and throat scorched and scarred, and her poor arms and hands. And all that night, backwards and forwards, Noel Jarvis walked in the corridor, like a man half out of his mind.

"If she is to die, let me see her again," he implored of Lady Bab, and she did not refuse.

"So you were her lover?" she said, and he answered, "Yes."

The next day came, and the next—Christmas Day—and that morning, the most blest of all the year, the doctors told Lady Bab that they hoped her young friend would live.

By this time Melicent Penny had had an interview with Captain Jarvis, and had informed him, that as he seemed so wrapped up in the life of the poor, burnt girl lying upstairs, that she thought she should prefer breaking off her engagement with him. And Jarvis had answered by telling her the truth.

"We were to be married," he said; "only poverty prevented us."

Thus, when Lady Bab was told there was hope for Sibyl, she considered herself justified in sending for Jarvis.

"Captain Jarvis," she said, in her brusque way, "I am an old-fashioned woman and like to pay my debts. The poor girl there," and she nodded in the direction of Sibyl's room, "saved my life; and you saved hers by your promptitude and courage. Now, though I don't spend my money in the ostentatious way that my niece Melicent does, I am, still, not a poor woman, and I want to make you a gift—a Christmas gift—to show my gratitude?"

Then, Jarvis bent down, and took Lady Barbara's hand.

"Will you give me one gift," he said, with deep emotion; "the sweetest gift—Sibyl herself?"

Lady Barbara laughed; she had hoped for such an answer.

"Well," she said, "if you call a young woman the sweetest gift, I don't! I call *life*—Sibyl saved my life—so when you get what you think the sweetest, she shall not go to you penniless. Would you like to see her now?"

And Jarvis followed Lady Bab to Sibyl's bedroom, and knelt down by the bed, and took the poor burnt, bandaged hands in his and kissed them, and laid them against his cheek.

"My sweetest gift," he whispered, "my sweetest, sweetest gift!"

* * * * *

And Lady Bab was as good as her word. She settled on these young people during her lifetime an income sufficient for all their requirements, and she left them, after her death, what she called in her quaint, old-world fashion, "something very pretty indeed!"

A FLOATING DRAMA.

By GEO. MANVILLE FENN,

AUTHOR OF "THE MASTER OF THE CEREMONIES," "ONE MAID'S MISCHIEF," ETC., ETC.

ACT I.

THE DOCTOR HAS HIS EARS OPEN.

THE yacht "Azure" lay off Greencombe nearly motionless on the calm waters of the Bristol Channel. The high cliffs of the North Devon coast were ruddy and green and purple and gold in the hot sunshine, and the grey gulls flew softly here and there uttering their querulous cries, as if wondering why a short stout elderly gentleman in a blue serge pea-jacket and straw hat should have chosen so damp and stony a spot for an afternoon nap as that by the reef of shaley rocks which ran down from the broken cliff into the sea.

All the same, Doctor Portway had landed when the yacht's boat came ashore, and wandered away to smoke a cigar in peace as he said, where there was not so much chatter.

John Luftleigh, the wealthy young owner of the yacht, landed at the same time in company with his handsome young wife and Captain Derwick, these four being of the party on board the yacht taking an idling trip round the Welsh coast, and skirting that of North Devon as well.

There were three other ladies and two gentlemen on board, but Doctor Portway classed them all as nobodies at one time; as chatter machines at another.

Upon reaching the little pier the doctor had lounged in one direction, the captain in another, and John Luftleigh had strolled with his wife toward the great hotel on the cliff in search of stores as he called it; but he did not let his friends go till he had admonished them to remember dinner at six to the minute.

Doctor Portway wandered here and there, examining sea weeds, shells and the well-rolled pebbles of the shore till he was tired, and then sat down in a niche with his back to the sun-warmed rock and smoked his cigar.

By the time he had smoked his cigar he felt drowsy, and feeling that he had earned a nap, he went off fast asleep.

Five minutes later a grey gull dropped softly upon a neighbouring rock, looked at him curiously and remained watching with

head on one side as if wondering whether the doctor's reddish-brown nose was good to eat.

Another gull that was sailing round and round came nearer, and with elevated wings and extended web feet alighted beside the first to join in the inspection, followed by half-a-dozen more; but only for the whole flock to take flight as a ruddy-looking man in a blue jersey rowed his heavy boat ashore, landed, and carried up mast, sail, oars, and a heavy basket of fish to place in a hole of the rock which acted as a storehouse, his hut being halfway up the cliff.

The man looked at his fish, then in the direction of the village, and after saying "pipe first," sat down on the opposite side of the rocks which sheltered the doctor sleeping unseen in his niche, and began to smoke.

He had been smoking about five minutes when the doctor, who was dreaming of Mrs. Luftleigh's handsome young face and its constant air of sadness, began to mix up Captain Derwick with his sleeping thoughts in an uneasy manner; then in a confused way he was asking his old friend John Luftleigh, the son of one who had almost been a brother to him, whether it was wise to invite a man like Derwick to share the trip, and then Derwick said, "Don't be a fool!"

The words were so emphatic that the doctor awoke and stared before him out to sea.

"I could have sworn I heard those words," he thought; and then he leaned forward, for an unmistakable voice said:

"I offer you ten shillings a time, and on the night when it is done a sovereign."

"Yes, sir, that's all right," said a gruff voice; "but, you see, I'm a bit pertickler, and I like to know what it's for when I put to sea."

"Particular! The man who smuggles and wrecks, and is ready for anything!"

"There arn't no harm in a bit o' smuggling; and as for picking up a bit o' wreckwood or a carxk, nobody but a blarned old coastguard——"

"Once more; will you do it?"

"Hang off and on arter dark till I sees a light in the second port cabin winder, eh?"

"Yes, will you do it?"

"Ten bob each time I'm empty, and twenty the night I brings you ashore?"

"Yes."

"Make it two poun' on the night as I lands yer, and the job's done."

"Well, I will give you two sovereigns."

"'Greed," said the gruff voice, and something more followed, but inaudible to the doctor, for the speakers had walked away.

"Humph! what shall I do?" muttered the doctor. "What devil's game is this? Now, if I had been a man of high principle I should have risen and declared myself; but then I am not a man of high principle, and I wanted to know what it all meant." The doctor lit a second cigar.

"Humph! Pretty young wife; old flirtation with the handsome captain. Parents willed that she should marry rich John Luftleigh who worships her, and then poor John, with his big trust in everybody he knows, brings the captain on board his yacht, where they look at each other in a way I don't like to see. What a confoundedly bad cigar!

"Now then, what shall I do? Play boldly and tell the poor fellow I suspect something wrong? He'd half kill me. Can't speak; and can't stand still and see evil done and his home blighted. Paradox: what shall I do?"

Pause.

"Go back on board and get something to eat.

"Tell you what I'll do," he said aloud to nobody, as he was half-way back to the pier; "I'll get a couple of big boulder stones on board, and pitch one into and sink that boat."

ACT II.

THE EFFECT OF MEDDLING.

Six o'clock, and the little party assembled in the yacht saloon to as pleasant a dinner as wealth could provide. John Luftleigh seemed to have but one aim, that of making his guests enjoy their trip; and in this he seemed to be ably seconded by his wife, who never looked more bright and handsome; but it struck Doctor Portway that the tone of her voice hardened when she addressed her husband, and to become of sweeter modulation when speaking to others.

"I should have declared it mere fancy yesterday," he said to himself; "but now—ah, it's a bad business! I never had any children; if I had—girls—I'd have let them choose for themselves."

Captain Derwick was the life and soul of the party, and his sallies were received with acclamation. He was full of plans—fishing, a trip to Exmoor and a picnic on the highest point, to all of which John Luftleigh agreed.

"Shall you go, my dear?" he said in regard to the last proposition.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Luftleigh rather coldly.

"It means a very long walk," said Luftleigh smiling.

"I should like a long walk," said the lady, and she glanced involuntarily toward Captain Derwick, who was, however, talking very earnestly to a lady on his right.

"A very bad business!" said the doctor again to himself, and he took a glass of sherry.

The evening came on dark, but deliciously soft and calm. The ladies clustered together near the wheel chatting and singing, and Doctor Portway stationed himself near the bows on the look out for the boat that was to hang about for ten shillings an evening. Still undecided as to the course of action.

For a long time, as he leaned over the gunwale smoking, he could see nothing; but at last the phosphorescent gleam of the water revealed to him the fact that a boat had anchored not far from the yacht, and the occupant was apparently fishing.

"To take off notice," muttered the doctor. "Very clever. Wish Captain Derwick was in her, and a hole in her bottom."

"Well, Uncle Diogenes," said a bluff voice, and a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Hallo! You? How is it you're not with the ladies and—your wife?"

Luftleigh started slightly at the question, and then said:

"They seem happy enough without me."

"Humph! Of course. You leave that man Derwick to do all the entertaining."

"Well, Derwick is a very good fellow, genial and pleasant."

The difficulty of how to begin and warn his friend had been troubling the doctor; now he seemed launched all at once, and could not have stopped himself had he tried.

"Good fellow: yes, very."

"What do you mean?"

"What do I mean! Look here, Jack, my boy. Your father and I were the oldest of friends; and as for you, sir, wasn't I the first to hold you up, and say—'A fine sturdy little chap, sound in wind and limb?'"

"Of course, you have been like a second father to me."

"Well then, you must not be put out if I speak too plainly."

"Go on. I shall not be put out," said Luftleigh hoarsely.

"I don't like Derwick, and I don't think you ought to like him. Get rid of him: send him ashore."

"On what pretext?" said Luftleigh coldly. "I cannot quarrel with the guest I have invited here."

"I could; and I shall soon. Jack, my dear boy, he is not a fit companion for young ladies. Humph! Better have held my tongue," muttered the doctor, as Luftleigh suddenly wrenched himself away.

ACT III.

DANGEROUS WORK.

THERE is a good deal of the ostrich in people who are engaged in an intrigue. They run their heads into the hot heap of sand

of their passion, and take it for granted that no one has the slightest idea of what is going on. Hands are squeezed; loving glances dart; and there may be a furtive kiss; all of which is supposed by these human ostriches to have passed entirely unnoticed, when all the time, the parties engaged, while listening to the dictates of their own hearts, have not used half so much discretion as a small boy going to rob an orchard.

It was so on board the yacht, where the only ignorant persons were Edith Luftleigh and Captain Derwick. The former drifting on a swift tide of the sea of life rapidly away to destruction; the latter revelling in the delight that this handsome woman, his old love, had not forgotten the happy hours of the past, and was ready to give him back look for look, whilst witched thereby he forgot friendship, honour, manhood, and allowed himself to float onward too.

He was not a dishonourable man at heart, and his love for Edith in her maidenhood had not been very deep. He had flirted, danced, given her flowers, and finally gone off to Egypt with his regiment. Had he returned to find the lady still single, he would have flirted, danced, and taken her flowers again in all probability, that is all; but when his regiment was ordered home and he reached London covered with glory, so his friends called it—the said glory consisting in leading his company to bayonet some half-nude blacks—he found Edith married, and that made all the difference.

Now he told himself that he loved her desperately, that he was heart-broken; that life had no further charm for him; and—he accepted an invitation to dinner with the newly-married couple.

Dangerous on both sides, but a soldier boasts of being able to face danger, and Captain Derwick faced this, but unlike his Egyptian experience, he did not come forth unharmed, so that when the invitation was given to join the Luftleights in their yachting cruise, matters were approaching the dangerous stage.

The quarters off the little Devon harbour were so snug, the country around so beautiful, and the weather so deliciously calm, that it was determined to stay a couple of days longer, but no change in the company was made.

"Is he a fool and blind?" said the doctor on the third night of their stay. "Surely what I said ought to have been enough to arouse him to a sense of his—of her danger. He ought to have done something. He is weak or else I am a brutal cynic and a confoundedly suspicious wretch. Humph! there's the boat again, and that scoundrel fishing. Looks as if I were not suspicious without cause. I must point out the boat to him and tell him what I heard. Ah!"

It was just light enough for him to see between the star-spangled sky and the glittering water the figures of Captain Derwick and Edith Luftleigh leaning against the side of the yacht,



"Handed her over the low bulwark to the sturdy fellow in the boat."

"A FLOATING DRAMA."

the captain talking to her earnestly, and Luftleigh on the other side conversing with his other guests.

The doctor's ejaculation was caused by the action of the young yacht-owner, who suddenly crossed to where the couple were standing and said something in a low voice.

The doctor was listening and trying to catch what fell from his friend's lips, when a gruff voice behind him said softly:

"Say, Dick mate, skipper's beginning to smell a rat."

The doctor sprang up and faced the man, who fell back in astonishment.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said confusedly, "I thought it was my mate."

The man turned away, and Dr. Portway made an impatient gesture.

"Poor John," he muttered, "even his men notice it. Good heavens! What a scoundrel the man must be! Evening!" he said gruffly, as the object of his thoughts approached and made a remark about the weather.

"Have a cigar?"

"No thanks," said the doctor in a voice that was more abrupt than before—so rough was it that the captain resented the tone and address.

"As you please," he said coolly, and he lit his cigar and began to smoke in silence.

The doctor left him to his meditations, and walked aft to go down to the cabin, where he was followed directly after by Luftleigh and his wife. The rest descended, the captain coming last, and after some remarks had been made respecting the temptation to sit up on such a night as this, the guests sought their berths, leaving Edith seated in the saloon and John Luftleigh walking slowly up and down, not a word being spoken, but Edith was watching him intently the whole time.

At last, with a gesture full of impatience, she rose.

Luftleigh stopped.

"Where are you going?" he said in a low, stern voice.

"To our room—to bed," she said coldly.

"Stop, come on deck. We shall be alone there. I cannot talk to you here."

He spoke in a low, excited whisper which made her shiver.

"What can you have to say to me that cannot be said in our room?" she replied.

"Much. I cannot say what I wish there. I must have the free air of God's heaven above me. Come!"

She shrank from him, for there was a change in his manner, a look in his eyes that she had never seen there before, and she hung back in alarm.

For at that moment, as a flash of summer lightning suddenly cuts the clouds and seems to reveal a golden landscape which the

darkness had before kept hidden, so did a gleam of mental light display to her for the first time the precipice on which she stood, and as she saw all this, the sensation of shrinking was accompanied by a chilling feeling of horror, and the cold indifference she had felt for her husband now became absolute dislike and fear.

He saw her movement, and grasped her wrist with a fierce grip, as he led her to the cabin door, never relinquishing his grasp, but drawing her up the stairway and then placing her arm within his, as he walked forward to where two men of the crew were keeping the watch.

"I shall be on deck for some time," he said, "and will call you when I leave. You can go below."

"Ay, ay, sir," said one of the men, and as they went down Captain Derwick, who had stolen softly out of his cabin, crept slowly along the saloon, ascended the cabin steps, till his head was on a level with the deck, and stood listening for a few moments before stepping softly down again back to his cabin, and then, shutting himself in, he took from his portmanteau a small pane of tinted glass which he placed in the round window and behind it set his candle so as to cast a coloured ray out upon the darkness of the night.

Meanwhile John Luftleigh had walked slowly up and down the deck till Edith had recovered herself somewhat from the first shock to her feelings, and began to resent her husband's strange behaviour.

"Why have you done this; why have you brought me here?" she said in a constrained whisper.

"You ask me this!" he said, with his voice trembling with passion; "tell me, before I answer your question, what more I could have done to show my love and tenderness for you."

She shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"Grant," he whispered, "that ours was a *mariage de convenance*, a hasty choice on my part: still I loved you. I have brought to you all a man's true honest affection; I have sought in every way to make you my honoured wife, to show the world in which we live that this was no light choice on my part. Surely my devotion has merited some return; but what have I met with from the first? Nothing but the same cold, repelling manner. You have never said so in words, but in look and manner it has always been, 'I am the slave you bought of my parents with your money; make much of me, for you could not buy my love.'"

"Well," she said coldly, "what could I do? Would you have had me play the hypocrite and assume a love I did not feel?"

"Ah!" he said; "at last!" and his words seemed the more impressive from being spoken in a whisper. "You throw off the mask?"

"I have never worn one," she said bitterly. "I have assumed nothing, and therefore have not changed."

"Oh!" he ejaculated, and his grasp grew so tight upon her wrist that he gave her intense pain, but she did not shrink. The spirit roused within her made her able to bear the physical as well as the mental pain. The time had arrived which she had always seen looming in the future, and she was ready now to meet it, but in no coward spirit, for her husband's every word, while it cut and stung, seemed but to whip her up to fresh defiant action, and at last she wrested her wrist from his grasp and stood at bay:

"What did you expect?" she whispered, for the desire was strong within her to keep the altercation a secret from all on board. "The love and devotion of the wife to whom I gave my name."

"No; bought the right to give it to me," she whispered. "Well, I can give you no more."

"Very well, then," he said bitterly; "I accept my fate. But that is not all."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you think me blind?"

She was silent, and drawing a long breath, he went on:

"I have borne till I can bear no more," he whispered with passionate earnestness. "The loving words and looks for which I have hungered this long year past I see given to another, even while I am treated with a cold and chilling contempt."

She was silent for a moment, and then, as if stung to action, she whispered back:

"How dare you speak to me like that!"

"Because you are my wife; because you are plotting against my honour."

"John Luftleigh, beware what you are saying," she panted.

"Bah, woman!" he cried, catching her wrist, "I am not blind. Look there."

"Well," she said coldly.

"Can you see that boat?"

"Yes, I see a boat," she said contemptuously.

"That boat has been waiting there these three nights, and for what?"

"How can I tell?" she replied coldly.

"I grant that you do not know; I believe that you cannot be so base. But I will tell you. It has been chartered by the man who grasps my hand morning after morning, who sits at table as my guest, ready for the moment when the foolish woman I call wife will consent to share his flight and be rowed ashore to—yes, it is there—to perdition, for such a woman must be cursed."

"John Luftleigh!"

"It is true," he cried. "Do you dare to deny that Edward Derwick has asked you to elope with him—now from here?"

She did not answer.

"You own to it," he said hoarsely; "and though you have not yielded, yet I have seen enough to know that you are standing

on the very verge, and that at any moment you may take the irrevocable step. Is not this true?"

"Yes," she cried fiercely; "it is true. I can bear it no more; my life has been with you one long lie, and I will live it no longer. I did not know that a boat was waiting; but he, the man who has always loved me, and whom I have always loved, has asked me to share his lot, and I tell you that I shall go."

"Never!" he cried.

"Unless you kill me," she said hoarsely. "There! I shall not flinch; better dead than your miserable slave."

He towered over her in the agony of his rage, and his hand clenched as if he would have struck her down; but with a moan he let his hands fall to his side, and caught at the stay close by where he stood, for the blood had rushed to his head and he nearly fell.

"No," he said in a low piteous voice, "I could not kill you. Let your remorse do that when some day you awaken to the reality of what you have done. You leave me—with him—the man you have—God in heaven! is it true?"

He ceased speaking for a few moments, whilst his wife stood clinging to the bulwark, hardly able to keep herself erect.

"Yes," he continued, "it is true, and the world would point the finger of shame at you and say, Adulteress! you, the woman I loved! But it shall not be so, Edith—it shall not be so. I will not punish you like that. There is a way of freeing you from such a tie as this, and I will prove to you how true and disinterested is the love you cast away. The brand of shame shall not glow upon the brow I loved to kiss. It shall be as you wish; you shall live the lie no longer, you shall be free."

Giddy, palpitating with emotion, almost blind, Edith Luftleigh stood there clinging to the bulwark. She hardly realized what her husband had said; she could not grasp the full meaning of his words, nor that he had left her, till a fresh step approached and a well-known voice whispered the one word, "Edith," in her ear.

ACT IV. .

"AT LAST!"

HER lover, the man who had again and again poured forth his passionate appeals to which she had listened with glowing cheeks; and now her husband knew all: he had heard her defiant words, and instead of crushing her in his anger he had left her with the words still ringing in her ears that he would set her free.

"Free—free to be Edward Derwick's."

She caught him by the hands.

"Did you hear?" she whispered. "He sets me free, Edward; he sets me free."

"Then he knows all?"

"Yes, everything; and he sets me free."

"But," faltered Derwick, "I cannot meet him. I have all ready; you must come."

"Come?"

"Yes! now at once."

"No, no! Do you not understand? John Luftleigh will set me free. There will be a divorce; and then there will be no need for me to blush for my love."

"What madness!" whispered Derwick excitedly; "can you not see how I am placed? Look at the position—here on board his yacht—at his mercy. We cannot stay: it is folly. Who knows what may happen when we meet? There, do you hear that?"

"I hear the splash of an oar," said Edith, as she feebly tried to wrest her hand from that which held it.

"Yes: it is the boat that will bear us away to love and joy," whispered Derwick passionately. "He resigns you to me, come while there is time."

"No, no; I cannot—I will not. The disgrace."

"The horror of the scene that must ensue when we meet."

"Yes; that would be dreadful, Edward. You must go; you cannot stay here. In a few short months I can be your wife. Pray, pray go."

"What folly to resist when all is our own. There, the boat is alongside; no one on deck. Come!"

"It is impossible," said Edith, feebly now, and her struggles to release her hand almost ceased.

"Are you close up?" whispered Derwick, as, still holding Edith tightly, he leaned over the side and spoke to the man who had softly rowed alongside.

"Yes, sir; all right."

"Quick, then—take her. Not a sound, mind."

"Edward! for pity's sake!"

Her voice rose as she struggled hard in alarm; but the effort had come too late. Rendered desperate by his position and the dread of an encounter with John Luftleigh, at the same time unwilling to surrender his prize when she was within his grasp, Derwick by one rapid movement flung his arm round her waist, lifted her from the deck, and handed her over the low bulwark to the sturdy fellow in the boat.

"Got her?"

"Yes."

Derwick swung himself over and dropped into the boat, thrusting it away from the side, and seizing an oar as he took his place on one of the thwarts.

"Now," he whispered, "row for your life."

"Which way, sir—to the harbour?"

"No, no; with the tide—up the channel. Pull."

The oars dipped, and the boat rapidly made way so that in a few moments the yacht showed merely as a long dark object with a light here and there gleaming from rigging and port, while a faint glow rose from the saloon windows.

Directly after there was the sound of voices on deck, for the slight scuffle had brought up three of the crew.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted a voice.

"Help!" cried Edith faintly.

"Edith, are you mad!" said Derwick. "Here, take both," he whispered to the man, as he passed his oar and leaned forward to catch his companion's hands. "How can you be so foolish? Sit still; be sensible. It is too late for that folly now. And think: we are both free."

"Free?" moaned the wretched woman, "free? What have I done? what have I done?"

"Listened to the voice of your heart; listened to me," whispered Derwick passionately, as the lights in the schooner grew more distant. "My darling! at last—at last!"

At that moment there was a smothered report accompanied by the shivering of glass.

Then a pause, followed by shrieks and the loud hurried talking of men.

"What's that?" cried Edith wildly as she started up. "John! Husband! What have I done?"

"Edith, for pity's sake be calm," panted Derwick, who was trembling now with excitement. "It was only a pistol shot, and we are invisible now."

"Invisible? Do you not understand? He said I should be free, and I have driven him to this."

"Driven—to what?"

"To what?" moaned the wretched woman; "to suicide for his faithless wife?"

"Nonsense! nonsense!" whispered Derwick hoarsely. "What are you thinking? It is childish; sit down. What are you going to do? You mad woman! be still."

The words were vain, for in her excitement the woman's strength was tremendous; and it needed all the power Derwick could put forth to hold her back from her desperate effort to fling herself into the sea.

"Here! steady! mind! You'll capsize us," cried the boatman; but his words of warning came too late. Edith was making one of her most frantic attempts.

"John—husband!" she cried in her despair, as she got one foot upon the gunwale, and in the scene which ensued the sea poured in over the side, while the effort made by the boatman to save hastened the catastrophe.

The next moment they were all struggling in the water with the black darkness above and the yacht's lights distant astern.

ACT V.

"TO ERR IS HUMAN : TO FORGIVE——"

"WHAT'S that?" cried Doctor Portway, hastening out into the saloon, after hurrying on a few garments.

"The master, sir," cried the pale-faced steward. "Shot himself, sir."

"What!"

It proved to be too true, for as the alarm was raised on deck, Luftleigh had rushed out, gleaned the news that he was dishonoured, cast one despairing look in the direction taken by the boat, and then hurried back to his cabin, from whence the report of the pistol had been heard.

"Good God! That it should come to this!" cried the doctor, as he hastily examined the wound, after laying the apparently dying man upon the floor. "Ah! what's that?"

For a wild shout, following upon a piercing shriek, came off the sea, and as the doctor rose to his feet, it was with the one word "Retribution" on his lips.

Hastily binding John Luftleigh's wound, he ran on deck to find that the yacht's boat was rapidly making its way in the direction from which kept coming a cry for help, supplemented from time to time by a hoarse "Ahoy!"

"What does it mean?" said the doctor to the one man left of the crew, as he stood gazing astern, trying to pierce the darkness. It was for the sake of saying something, for knew what the sailor would say.

"Mean, sir?" cried the man excitedly; "it means as the boat as boarded us has been capsized, and that one as keeps shouting 'Help!' is swimming, and getting weaker, a-losing heart, while t'other as calls 'Ahoy!' is hanging on to the boat."

"Horrible!" muttered the doctor.

"Ay, 'tis, sir. I've done it myself afore now."

Just then, in answer to the piteous appeals which came out of the darkness, there was a cheery shout to "Hold on!" from the yacht's boat, the men in which were rowing with all their might.

"If we could only help," cried the doctor, stamping in his impotence, while a horrible sense of dread came over him as he heard the cry of "Help!" grow more and more faint.

"Hold on!" came again from the boat as the hoarse 'Ahoy!' arose, and the yacht's crew plied their oars till the water hissed beneath the bows. "Where away?" was plainly heard on the yacht's deck.

Then came a wild, gurgling cry, sounding faint and strange, and the sailor laid his hand upon the doctor's arm.

"He's gone, sir," he whispered.

"No, no; don't say that, my man."

"I must, sir. I know. He's throwed up his hands and gone down. That was his last shout."

"Ahoy!" came again from out of the darkness, as the doctor wiped the cold sweat from his brow. Then followed a confused hum of voices from the distance, and some one shouted again and again, but without evoking an answer.

"That was one o' my mates as hollered sir," whispered the sailor, breaking the silence.

"Ah," he said again after a pause, "I can hear 'em. They're a-coming back."

A good half-hour had elapsed since the last cry was heard before the yacht's boat came alongside, and Doctor Portway helped to lift aboard the drenched insensible form of Edith Luftleigh, so cold and lifeless apparently that the doctor shuddered as he bore her into the cabin after seeing that a rough boatman was able to climb over the bulwark—and that was all.

"No, sir," said the boatman hoarsely; "it was too dark. I got hold of the lady when she rose. See her white dress, and I grabbed that and held on to the boat. I heard him keep calling for help as he swam and hailed him to come to us, but he drifted away with the tide, got weaker, and went down."

It was a long fight with the grisly shadow, but Dr. Portway won. Two hours had elapsed before Edith Luftleigh began to breathe regularly again, and a couple more had passed before she knew that her husband lay in the same cabin apparently dying from a bullet wound in his breast.

It is wonderful what a good doctor and a good nurse can effect. In this case the doctor was triumphant, and as John Luftleigh realized the sorrow and penitence of the patient nurse who tended him night and day, and saw how love—a genuine love—was struggling with her despair, a change took place, and he amended rapidly.

Then came the day when, during his convalescence, the news was brought to him that his nurse had gone, leaving a letter. This told him how he had no longer need for her services, asked his forgiveness and bade him good-bye for ever.

John Luftleigh sank back in his chair, gazing straight before him as he thought of the world and its ways.

"What is it to me—to us!" he said. "The past is dead; a new life has begun for both: and we began to live on the night we both faced death. Ah, doctor, you here?"

"Yes. I've heard the news. What are you going to do?"

"'To err is human—to forgive divine.' I've read that somewhere, doctor. What should you do?"

"I? Oh, I'm only a weak man."

"So am I, thank God!" said John Luftleigh; and that day he took a loving wife to his breast.

THE MAN IN CORDS.

By EVELINE MICHELL FARWELL,†

AUTHOR OF "DISDAINFUL DI," ETC.

"'Twas a dull November morning,
South wind and cloudy sky,
When if ever scent could aid us
A fox was doomed to die!"

"HE ought to die to-day, oughtn't he, George?" says Audrey Chaytor to her cousin as they jog to cover.

"Well, yes; you can never tell, but if ever there was a hunting morning this is one. If we only have luck enough to get out of the big wood, you will get the cream of the country, not to be despised, I can tell you, even by a young woman from the Shires."

"How far are we from Aston now?" Audrey asks. "We must be awfully late; you manage your trains very badly; what is the good of landing one three miles from the meet a quarter of an hour too late?"

"Quite time enough for Aston; they draw Black Banks first, and draw it blank to a certainty. Holloa! hounds by Jove; they can't be running."

"They *are*," cries Audrey, and at a turn of her wrist Cock Robin jumps into a field to the right. Hounds are well to the left, two or three fields in front. Now George Chaytor doesn't like jumping; he knows every inch of the country, and is mostly there or thereabouts, though he rarely jumps a stick. Still Audrey is his cousin, and a very pet cousin too, so relinquishing all idea of a convenient lane leading to a line of gates, he puts his splendid weight carrier at a nice weak place and pursues the dainty figure on the bay. What a difference there is though between eight stone and fifteen, and what a pace that thorough-bred gallops! Good heavens! the child is never going for that post and rails. George rams his spurs in, but before he gets within hailing distance Cock Robin lifts himself over in a fashion truly heart-rending to those who want a hole made for them, and many such there are, for George is well with the field now, while Audrey, if she hasn't quite taken

"The place that is 'hers' by right
And leads the van in the foremost flight,"

is well in it with a few red-coats and a man in cords on a big

chestnut, who with huntsman and whip, and a stoutish sporting-looking lady in an immaculate blue habit, are on pretty even terms with hounds.

For the first twenty minutes the line is an easy one, but a sudden turn to the right somewhat alters matters; the meadows in which it lands them afford first-rate galloping, but are strongly fenced, and one or two of the horses push through in a manner somewhat unsatisfactory to their owners' legs. The big chestnut, however, is going fresh as ever, and when Audrey steadies Cock Robin through a sticky bit of plough, she scrutinizes horse and rider with appreciative admiration. The former, well ribbed-up, with a good sloping shoulder, huge flat hocks, and "quarters to lift him clean over a town," is up to far more weight than he carries in "White Cords"; that he takes a bit of riding is evident, but in the steady grip of strong hands held low on the withers, he must needs go as his rider chooseth. Whatever else this man in cords may be, he is an undeniable horseman; long and lean, with thighs made for grip, he looks all sinew, he and his chestnut making a pair it would be hard to beat.

By the time Audrey has taken in all these points, White Cords has picked a clean place in a fence which apparently has a biggish ditch on the far side, for the first red-coat who tries it disappears, horse and all. Audrey follows the chestnut, but when she finds herself in the air, has considerable qualms as to where she will come down. Cock Robin is equal to it, however, and lands with never a scramble; White Cords turns to see her over, and says: "To the right, I think, they are turning again," and so they were. The M. F. H., one of the three red-coats remaining (the others being mixed up with their horses in the last ditch), mutters, "Headed, by Jove! He'll cross the West Brook now," and makes for a lane some few hundred yards off; other red-coats and Blue Habit follow suit, but the chestnut sticks to the hounds, and so does Audrey. A couple of easy fences bring them in view of a wide, black, and boggy banked brook. Hounds cross it, and huntsman and first whip essay to follow. Flop! in goes the huntsman over head and ears. Squish! the whip's gallant black touches the rotten bank, but slides back: standing well up in the stirrups, however, and giving all the help that hand and voice can afford, he and his horse somehow scramble out together. Again White Cords looks back. Cock Robin's head is set straight for the brook: his mistress's eyes fixed steadily on a furze bush that may promise firm foothold. No chance that the pair will flinch. With a curious kind of feeling, suspiciously like nerves, White Cords puts the pace on. The chestnut's hind legs slip down the wretched rotten bank on the far side, bringing his nose to mother earth, but those iron hands have him up in a second, and, as he rises, White Cords finds Cock Robin landing to his right, well in the field, with nothing to fear from rotten banks.

Audrey pats his neck with murmured words of praise, and White Cords can't help exclaiming, "What a jump! I never saw anything so prettily done. I believe he'd clear a river."

"I do believe he would," said his mistress, whose faith in her bay is limitless, though not unfounded. Just then the hounds, who had got a bit puzzled, went off at score again, and the two brook jumpers have it all to themselves, although huntsman and whip are only a field or two behind, the former dripping profusely, but thanking his stars with undamped ardour that he is not altogether out of it. Possibly thanks are more due to the whip who caught his horse, but then, if the whip's star had not befriended him, he, too, might have been *sub aqua*.

They are out of the boggy ground now, and have nothing but some pleasant little flies to negotiate. Suddenly White Cords rises in his stirrups, and shading his eyes with his hand, peers eagerly forward.

"Yonder he goes!"

The huntsman rams in his spurs, and Audrey, craning forward, sees a slender brown streak glide up the hedgerow, and slip under a post and rails which tops the hill in front of them. Putting Cock Robin at a low stone wall, she tears up the grassy slope, White Cords just in front. As they near the crest, hounds break from scent to view; a few hundred yards settle it, and the straight-goer dies game in the open before they are half down the hill. Surely that ringing shout must reach the stragglers' ears.

"I knew 'twas the grey fox," says the huntsman, as he gallops up; "he'll never lead us this line again; Gatacre Gorse is where he was bound for, and we're within a mile of it; he was a game 'un, he was."

"So he's an old customer," says White Cords; "I owe him something for honouring my first appearance. I don't know when I've had such a rattling run."

"Ah!" says the old huntsman, slowly shaking his head from which the water still dripped, "it mostly takes strangers to try that brook. You think twice about them beastly banks when they've let you in a few times. Your chestnut jumped it cleverly, sir, but the lady beat you."

"Indeed she did," says White Cords courteously; and turning to Audrey, adds: "Tophthorn and I haven't an atom of conceit left in us."

"You see water is his speciality," says Audrey smiling, as she strokes her favourite's neck; "no one could help going on Cock Robin."

"You're about right, miss," says the huntsman, scanning the pair approvingly, "we can all go well on the good 'uns."

White Cords looks at Audrey with a humorous twinkle, which makes it a little difficult for her to answer this back-hander sedately. White Cords has rather nice eyes: they are a very

funny shape, turning down at the corners, and have curious shades and gleams in them, which somehow give a strange charm to a face boasting no regular beauty. A big tawny moustache more than covers his mouth, and *au reste*—"Well! somehow he is delightful," thinks Audrey, as many women have thought before her.

But here comes the M. F. H. with a host of others making up for lost time when it is too late. George Chaytor is one of the first; he gallops up to Audrey's side, scrutinizing her eagerly, almost as though he expected her to have a broken bone or two about her.

"Well!" he says with a sigh, "I never expected to see you two alive together again; there's no doubt Cock Robin is all you said, and not a bit done either," he adds, with the true sportsman's instinct. "You've given me a horrid fright, though, Audrey; that post and rails was bad enough, but the West Brook!" words fail him, he shakes his head expressively, then devoutly adds: "Thank Heaven, I didn't see you do it."

Audrey's silvery laugh rings out as she answers, "What the eye does not see, eh! George? I didn't think yours was such eye service, and you might have trusted Cock Robin, he always takes care of me, and we never parted company but once."

"Won't you present me to your cousin, George?" interrupts the master at this juncture, "and give me the honour of offering her a brush, which, by the way, she has a better right to claim than I to offer."

Very courtly is this Saxon-looking M. F. H. Tall and stalwart, with close curling yellow hair, long yellow beard, and the usual blue eyes; a kind of Athelstan, thinks Audrey, while George says, "Sir Edward Meredith, Miss Chaytor," and Sir Edward introduces her to his wife, she of the blue habit. Lady Meredith is a delightful cheery woman, never jealous, at any rate in the hunting-field, though she does object to people who will take every fence exactly at her place and close on her. Any one riding her own line, however, as Audrey does, meets with her full approval.

White Cords does not seem to know any one, but a man who goes as he does is not likely to be left out in the cold, and he is now chatting with one or two envious thrusters. Not near Audrey, however, and when they move on to the next covert, she is surrounded by her acquaintances. George suggests "Home," but she laughs the notion to scorn, declaring that she and her bay are quite ready for another grey fox, if Sir Edward will but produce one. Presently she asks him who White Cords is. He has changed from the chestnut to a long wiry black, not a sociable animal apparently, for his master keeps well out of the crowd.

"No," says Sir Edward, "I can't make him out. No one seems to know him, and where on earth he can have come

from, puzzles me. He's a good 'un, whoever he is," he adds ungrudgingly.

Their destination, Gorton, is a favourite draw, and it certainly looks promising. There is good lying on the slope of the hill, and that thick undergrowth in the hollow seems hopeful. Two or three, including White Cords, go into covert with the hounds, but Audrey takes up her station at a likely corner, according to Sir Edward's advice; she has graciously accepted his proffered pilotage for there is a good deal of wire about, and it behoves a stranger to be wary.

They have not long to wait, first comes a whimper, then a short joyous yelp, and then —

"The dull air woke as from a trance
As sixty hounds gave chorus,
And away we went, with a stout dog fox
Not a furlong's length before us."

For the first mile the pace is pretty good, but the going is light, and most people are enjoying themselves: suddenly Audrey sees a line of coarse rushy meadows some way in front, marking the course of a river which looks a good deal swollen.

"To the left," says Sir Edward; "this is a watery day, he's across the river; there's a bridge over here though, and I don't think we shall lose much."

As Audrey turns to follow Sir Edward, she sees White Cords making straight for this murky water, and gives a slight exclamation, which makes Sir Edward turn round.

"By jove," he exclaims, "the fellow's mad, it's downright insanity for anything but a fish to try that river. I hope to goodness he'll get out again, he deserves a better fate than drowning."

"Is it so absolutely impossible?"

"All but, I should say; but people *do* do impossible things sometimes."

Audrey looks back and sees White Cords coaxing his horse into the foaming water, much against his will evidently, but the gallant black is of those who fear to flinch, and after a moments hesitation, he slides in. The current is stronger than White Cords had calculated, however, and despite his gallant struggles, the black is carried with the stream; the manner in which water insinuates itself between you and your saddle is not to be believed until you have tried it. White Cords *had* tried it, but not on the black, a new purchase, and apparently unused to swimming matches. Absorbed in efforts to keep his head up stream, White Cords loosens his grip, and with a gurgle of rejoicing, in rushes the water and floats him off. He still clutches the reins, but the black, missing his helping hand, loses courage, and floats helplessly down stream. There is no help for it, White Cords lets go, and striking out somehow, with boot-and-spur-encumbered limbs manages at length to reach some overhanging boughs, and drag

himself up the bank. There he stands shaking himself like a water spaniel, while Audrey all but cuts a voluntary through twisting her neck to see if he is really out of it, her eyes are anywhere but in front, and when Cock Robin takes her over a gap as though it were a gate, she very nearly sits side-saddle on his left ear. With a devout thanksgiving that there are no eyes in Sir Edward's broad back, she struggles into her saddle again, and gallops after her pilot.

Some labourers at work in the field on the far side of the river, had watched White Cords' venture with deep interest; two of them come to his aid, but the attention of the third is bent riverwards. Suddenly he shouts, "I say, sir, your horse will be drowned if you don't look out," and tears along the bank. White Cords follows as fast as top boots, filled with water and caked with mud, will let him. Sure enough there is the poor black fast tangled in the reeds, and utterly helpless; he is evidently quite exhausted, and can barely keep his head above water. In goes White Cords; the river is shallower here, and by the bank where the poor beast is stranded the water only reaches to his master's shoulder. The horse tries to raise his head in welcoming recognition, but his strength is spent, and down it goes again quite under water this time. White Cords catches him by the nose, and drags up his head on to his own shoulder, shouting to the men who stand staring on the bank to bring ropes and a cart horse if they've got one handy. By good luck they have, but many minutes go by before ropes and horse are collected, and poor White Cords finds his lengthened sojourn in water up to his neck, supporting a great heavy equine head on his shoulder, anything but enjoyable. There is some difficulty about fixing the ropes, but White Cords looks like a good investment, and one of the labourers is speculative enough to adventure his precious person on a somewhat rotten tree trunk, from which he can just reach the horse. Between them they fix the ropes at last. Crack goes the whip, and tug goes the cart horse. Very valiantly indeed he tugs, and at length the poor black is hauled up the bank, shivering, miserable, but obviously rejoiced at again touching *terra firma*. Distributing largesse sufficient to insure abundant assistance to the next unlucky sportsman, White Cords sets off sadly on a long jog to Westcot Station.

What an interminable way it is! After he has gone about five miles, which seem fifty at least, he catches sight of a big red house on a bit of rising ground at the end of an avenue of fine old oaks; a cheery looking Queen Anne mansion, suggestive of every comfort. "I wish to heaven I knew these people," thinks White Cords, "I wonder who they are? I'll ask that old woman in the donkey cart. If they are anything like a good sort they'll give us a rub down and a feed, won't they, old man?" addressing the sodden black. The old woman, an apple-cheeked old soul in a

poke bonnet and check shawl, comes slowly along. White Cords ranges alongside and inquires in his most courteous tone what place is that amongst the trees, and who lives there?

"That?" replies the dame; "why, lor' bless'ee, that be Lumleigh, the Earl of Lumleigh's place, to be zure. Don't 'ee know that? But there, you be a stranger," she added with condescending pity.

"Lumleigh," soliloquizes White Cords, "Lester's dad! Well, this *is* luck! I wonder where he is. Not here, I'll be bound; but the dad can't do less than advance drying and feeding on security of the fagging his son did for me at Eton."

Thanking the old lady for her welcome information, he jogs on.

The hall door is soon reached, and his ring is quickly answered by servants who, well used to hunting hospitalities, lead his horse off to the stables with never a query, and make 'proffer of a hot bath, soup, luncheon—anything! White Cords is quickly installed in a luxurious bath room; dressing gown and slippers are warming at the fire, and the butler is on the point of carrying off the miserable objects which but that morning had proudly proclaimed themselves "*Peal's Pride*," when White Cords suddenly recollects his train and inquires how far it is to Westcot.

"Six miles, sir."

"The devil! How on earth am I to get my clothes dried in time to catch the 6.50?"

"You haven't a change with you, sir?"

"Not in my pocket! I have at the station, but that's no earthly use."

"Well, sir, the dog-cart is just going into Westcot, and if the lad makes haste he can have your clothes here in plenty of time for you to catch the train."

"Capital! Tell him it's a small portmanteau, with R. K. M. on it. He'd better say Captain Kerr Murray sent him for it."

"Very good, sir."

What a delicious thing a hot bath is after a long day's hunting, more especially when one has been soaked through and through. Just as White Cords is revelling in it comes a knock at the door.

"Who's there? You can't come in."

"But I must come in."

"I tell you, you can't."

"And I tell you I must."

"You can't, I'm having a bath."

"Can't help it; I *must* come in."

"Then *come* in, and be d——d," says White Cords desperately, and the door opens to admit a young man with a fair, pleasant face, at that moment wearing a stern expression, evidently foreign to it. As White Cords rises from the waves to receive him the new comer exclaims: "Kerr Murray, by all that's marvellous! Why, my dear Kerr, I thought you were in India. Why on earth

didn't you tell me? They said a fellow calling himself Captain Carmery or some such name was in possession here, and I thought I'd better just see what he was up to. I *am* glad to see you, Kerr. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Many things," replied White Cords. "But, Lester, don't it strike you that I'm rather wet?"

"What a confounded idiot I am!" exclaims Lord Lester. "But I say, Kerr, look sharp; there's lunch going on downstairs, graced by beauty, too. The dad's brought in George Chaytor and the prettiest cousin it was ever man's luck to chaperon. Did you see her? rode a bay thoroughbred."

"I did; but I shan't see her now, unless you'll send me some clothes."

"Clothes! Of course I will. You don't mean to say they've brought you none?" And with this off goes Lord Lester, and White Cords can finish his bath in peace. "A real bit of luck this," he again soliloquizes, "finding Lester at home and that lovely little girl here, too. What a jockey she'd make." These reflections considerably curtail his ablutions, and he gets into the clothes Lester sends him with remarkable celerity. They are a bit too broad, but that doesn't matter he thinks, possibly conscious of having already made his mark as White Cords.

When he enters the dining-room he finds Miss Chaytor ensconced in a huge arm-chair, toasting her toes at a wood fire and drinking tea. Lester is leaning against the mantel-piece talking to her, while Lord Lumleigh and George Chaytor are occupied with poached eggs, &c. His appearance is eagerly hailed by Lord Lester, who introduces him all round and then plies him with food and drink of all kinds. Hunting talk is, of course, rampant. Kerr Murray learns that he lost nothing, for after the first burst scent failed, and they never got on terms with their fox again. Poor Lord Lester's hunting is all hearsay now, for an unlucky fall the very first day has placed him *hors de combat*. "I mean to be out again though, before the end of the month," he says. "You'll send for your things and stop here, Kerr, of course?"

Captain Murray is so deep in a talk with Miss Chaytor that he starts at this sudden question, although he replies with creditable coherence. It appears that he is staying with an uncle, General Vane, and can't well get away just yet. The general is a very old friend of Lord Lumleigh's, and the hearty invitation which had backed his son's to the "Sportsman" is cordially repeated to "Vane's nephew." Finally, they settle that he is to come over, boxes and horse-boxes, for some neighbouring festivities the end of the month.

"You know you have been promised to us for the occasion, Miss Chaytor," says Lord Lester. "Lady Margaret has undertaken to bring you, so please resign yourself to your fate."

It is very cosy round the log fire, but a winter's day is short and

its evening dark and dreary, so the Chaytors and Kerr Murray have to tear themselves from the charms of lounging-chairs, blazing fire, and genial hosts, to jog homeward through the deepening twilight. The greater part of their way lies together, and their acquaintance has been considerably cemented before Captain Murray turns off to the station.

CHAPTER II.

" Oh once I believed in a woman's kiss,
I had faith in a flattering tongue ;
For lip to lip was a promise of bliss,
When lips were smooth and young."

WITH Captain Kerr Murray these sentiments are by no means in the past tense, whether or no they will be when "the beard is grey on his cheek, and the top of his head grows bare" remains to be proved, but just now, although he puts considerable trust in his horses, he shows every inclination to put far more in woman.

The coming of age festivities at Briarwood, for which he, the Chaytors, and a variety of more or less amusing people stayed at Lumleigh, were a grand success. Audrey in a pale gold-coloured gown, with poinsettias nestling amongst its draperies, carried all before her. It was the colour of colours for a ball where nine-tenths of the men were in pink, and suited her even better than it did their coats. Lord Lester, now completely recovered, rarely took his eyes from that graceful figure floating round the room in golden clouds ; it was rather hard to have to do the civil to so many dowagers and to dance with so many antiquated belles or red-elbowed débutantes, when all dances not with Audrey were sheer waste. Notwithstanding his unfortunate position, however, he secured a fair share of her valse, and might have been moderately contented had Kerr Murray fared no better, but he, owing duty neither to dowagers nor débutantes, devoted more dances to the golden goddess than that little deity quite liked to count. Lord Lester was not quite so fond of Kerr Murray after that ball, but soon after Christmas a hard frost set in, and Captain Murray went off to shoot in Ireland before rejoining his regiment. He promised however to be at Chaytor Court for the Hunt Steeple-chases early in April.

"You must enter Topthorn for the Lumleigh cup," the old lord said to him. "You've hunted him quite often enough to qualify, and you would be pretty sure to win, I think."

Some time later the county generally was a good deal surprised by Lester's putting his favourite mare, "Circe," into training ; he had always vowed that nothing would induce him to ruin her mouth by steeple-chasing, but now when pressed on the subject

he said she had got a bit sticky at her fences, and he thought it would do her good. A more unjust accusation was never made, and Lester felt horribly guilty as he maligned his pet thus shamefully; it didn't help him out of his difficulty much either, for Circe was too well known in the hunting-field, and her fame too firmly established for such slander to be credited. Some people suggested that Lester's nerve had been shaken by that nasty accident and that he didn't give the mare a chance; these, however, were people from whose ken Circe had been wont to vanish before they got over their first fence.

The outsiders accepted Lester's explanation, but one or two intimates traced connecting links between the entry of Circe and that of Topthorn. The mare was quite thorough-bred, and it would have been hard to pick a hole in her for shape, colour, or anything else; her galloping was a marvel, she seemed to steal over the ground without effort, and she had never been known to turn her head at anything.

The first day of the races was bright and fine, although a nasty east wind was blowing, which nearly carried off several hats as the Chaytors' drag drew up on the course next Sir Edward Meredith's. Audrey sat next Kerr Murray and immediately behind her cousin, who was driving. Lady Delamere, a pretty little dark-eyed woman, occupied the box-seat, while a plain but pleasant damsel in blue serge, a couple of guardsmen, rather an uninteresting young county magnate, and a cheery old general completed the outside party, Lady Margaret Chaytor and the other chaperone being comfortably ensconced inside.

The first event is a flat-race, in which no one takes much interest. Between it and the next Captain Murray and Audrey go off to inspect the course, partly a natural one. Certainly man, aiding Nature, has provided at least one nasty looking obstacle in a stiff fence with running water on the far side.

"About the worst place in the whole course," says Kerr Murray, "just the thing to suit Cock Robin though, Miss Chaytor."

"The darling! as if I would have his dear mouth ruined by steeple-chasing," Audrey indignantly replies.

"Ah! just what Lester used to say of Circe," Captain Murray remarks drily; he fully realizes that Lester will do his level best to beat him in another race than to-day's, and perhaps his next remark is intended to ascertain the lay of the land.

"They tell me he's the only rival I need fear," he says, and adds in a tone which makes his meaning fairly clear, "certainly he is the one of whom I have always felt afraid." Audrey does not look up as she replies, "I didn't think you would fear rivals."

"I don't think I do often, but there are some races one hardly dare ride to win, because one dare not lose."

There is a sort of suppressed tremor in his voice, somewhat

surprising to himself, for he is used to have his emotions well under control; he stops suddenly. Audrey says nothing, but walks on studying the ground in most aggravating fashion. Kerr Murray looks at her, and bursts out almost angrily—"Won't you say *anything*?" Then Audrey looks up and says—

"I think—I would try to win."

"Well Kerr, I don't think much of your chance if you ride with as little regard to the course as you're walking," breaks in George Chaytor's voice behind them; "you're as deaf as posts, both of you. I thought I never should stop you, you'll get no luncheon if you don't look sharp. What on earth induced you to come down here?"

They have wandered right off the course, and all but reached the sands, which lie some way to the left.

"Miss Chaytor wanted to look for shells," says Captain Murray in so barefaced a manner that Audrey mentally notes how used he must be to dissimulation. Luncheon is in full swing when they reach the drag, but training considerably restricts Kerr Murray's meal, and when he goes off to inspect Topthorn, he leaves the others still hard at work. Before he returns, Lord Lester comes up, and after talking to Audrey for some little time, suggests that she should come into the paddock. Now Audrey had intended to go with Captain Murray; she hesitates, and Lester, with the meanness usually evinced by men in love, adds "You didn't arrange to go with Kerr Murray, did you? because I saw him with the Ashwoods just now, and they were all going to inspect Bill Ashwood's Grey."

Mrs. Ashwood happened to be Audrey's *bête noire*; she is very pretty, very smart, very fast, and crowning offence, she knew Captain Murray before Audrey had ever seen him; that he should be talking to Mrs. Ashwood when he might be talking to her is an unpardonable offence. Still, Audrey is far too quick-witted to miss the drift of Lord Lester's tale-bearing, and while determining that Captain Murray shall suffer for it, she administers a slight slap to his betrayer, as she says, "Oh, no! I had not arranged to go with Captain Murray, or of course I should wait for him, but I do want to see Topthorn."

Lester bites his moustache savagely; taking her to see Kerr Murray's horse was hardly what he desired, but it was something to take her anywhere, so he helps her down from her perch on the drag, and they walk off to the paddock.

Kerr Murray meantime has been chafing horribly under Mrs. Ashwood's chatter, and when he at last succeeds in freeing himself, and rushes off to the Chaytors' drag, he finds Audrey gone.

Pursuing her to the paddock, where she is talking to Lord Lester, and closely scanning the horses as they are led round, he asks:

"How do you think Topthorn looks, Miss Chaytor?"

"Very well," she replies coldly, and resumes her talk with Lester. Captain Murray's temper is by no means that of the lamb, and it was perhaps fortunate that his huge moustache was as useful an ally in smothering swearing as in suppressing smiles. Without a word (that is, an audible word) he walked off, but some unaccountable impulse impelled him to turn round just as he reached the gate, from which point he could look right into the centre of the ring, as the ground sloped slightly upwards. Audrey's head was turned towards him, and as her eyes met his, she grew scarlet and looked hurriedly away, but not before the wistful, half-penitent glance, which lent a wholly new expression to her bewitching face, had charmed all anger out of Kerr Murray's eyes and heart. A few hurried strides take him back to her side: luck favours him, for just then someone speaks to Lord Lester, and gives Captain Murray time to say, "Don't let us quarrel now, for Heaven's sake; make George bring you to see us start."

Audrey only bends her head in assent, but Captain Murray goes off contented.

"I think we ought to go back now," she says to Lord Lester, "or you will never be ready."

"Well! I'm afraid I ought to be dressing," he answers regretfully, so they depart, but meeting George Chaytor just outside the paddock, Audrey tells him that he must take her back to see them ride out, and despatches Lester to his toilet.

It is not long before they appear. First comes Mr. Ashwood on his grey, as good a hunter as man need desire, but no rival for Topthorn or Circe: Next a smart-looking brown mare, who looks like going, though some doubts are expressed as to her staying powers; and then comes Lord Lester. Certainly he and Circe are handsome as a picture: the beautiful bright bay, curving her shining neck as though in recognition of the murmur of admiration which greets her appearance, looks fit to win anything, while her master, always handsome, is doubly so in the Lumleigh blue.

Audrey and George are standing just outside, and Lester, reining up to speak to them, asks Audrey to wish him luck. "Luck!" she says, laughing and patting Circe's neck. "Why, with this sorceress to work her magic spells you can want nothing more. Let the best man win, say I."

Last of all comes Kerr Murray in scarlet and black. He is not "a thing of beauty" like Lester, but few men can touch him in the saddle. Topthorn is evidently in bad humour; a crowd always puts him out. He tosses his head, drags at the reins, and generally announces his determination to be disagreeable. When Captain Murray pulls him up at Audrey's side he rears straight on end, but as soon as he is again on all fours Audrey strokes his nose and speaks soothingly to him, which treatment, reminding

him of the many carrots taken from those dainty fingers, produces an angelic change in his behaviour, and he stands quite still.

"Tell me I have your good wishes, Miss Chaytor," Kerr Murray says.

"For what?" asks Audrey, "that you may not tumble off or that you may win? Dictate your wish."

Captain Murray laughs; then bending forward until his head is very near the golden curls which all but brush Topthorn's forehead he says earnestly, in a tone too low to reach any but Audrey's, "Wish me my heart's desire."

"Topthorn is looking very fit," says Audrey irrelevantly. Then raising her eyes for one second, she almost whispers, "Thine own wish, wish I thee in every place."

A glad light breaks over Kerr Murray's face, and he goes off in the preliminary canter looking as radiant as if the Olympian gods had descended to promise him the victory.

George and Audrey hurry off to the drag, and Audrey, scrambling up to the box-seat, fixes her glasses on a distant object whose colours may be black and scarlet, and whose vagaries make her pretty certain that they are no other. When the horses pass the drag Topthorn has settled to his stride, and his long, sweeping action as he comes down the course causes much satisfaction to his backers. Circe is the favourite though; she certainly is a lovely mover, and goes so smoothly on her bit that her rider has nothing to do but sit still.

There is some bother over the start. Topthorn again waxes troublesome, but they are off at last. The third fence is right in front of the Chaytors' drag; Circe leading, slips over it without an effort; the brown mare, immediately behind, takes it cleverly, and then comes Topthorn, who flies it with several feet to spare.

"I doubt if Kerr Murray's right to hold him back," one of the guardsmen remarks. "He'll have him deuced nasty if he don't look out; I know him of old."

"You see Circe's got the legs of him, or so we think," George Chaytor answers. "Kerr Murray's chance lies in the plough; the mare don't go well through dirt, and if he gets the lead there it's ten to one he keeps it."

They are now nearing the water jump, Circe still leading, Topthorn second. The mare flies it prettily; Topthorn, catching sight of the running water gleaming in the afternoon sun, swerves and tries to refuse. But, with the rapidity of lightning, Captain Murray's spurs are into him; before he knows where he is he is forced to try, and with a gigantic effort just manages to jump it standing. A shout of applause goes up: the jump is really marvellous. A good big place anyhow; to take it standing is a feat well nigh incredible. The brown mare jumps it neatly and gallops on, a good third. Bill Ashworth gets over with a

scramble, and a ragged-looking black hitherto unnoticed takes it in excellent style and looks like gaining on the brown.

About forty yards from the next fence Topthorn, whose ebullition of temper has cost him at least four lengths, puts on a rush like an express train, against which even Kerr Murray's iron muscles are as wax. The fence is a stiff one, but, mercifully, the only one on the course without a ditch. Topthorn tears through it; Kerr Murray's feet are dragged out of the stirrups, and he is as nearly as possible pulled off. But no, friend Topthorn, you don't get rid of him so easily, and regaining the saddle he takes up the lead. The next fence lands them in the plough, and here, sure enough, Topthorn's mighty muscle has the advantage. As they jump out of the second field Circe is but just jumping into it; the unknown black takes it alongside; the brown mare following; but she shows signs of distress, and her jockey is bound to ease her. Bill Ashwood, though taking every fence as cleverly as need be, is completely out of it: the race is between Topthorn, Circe, and possibly the black, for the brown mare won't be in it at the end of the third plough.

Once on the grass again, Circe creeps up a little. Lester rides her admirably, but Kerr Murray has no intention of decreasing his now considerable lead. At the last fence but one he is winning easily.

"Topthorn! Topthorn! Topthorn wins."

The shouts rouse his temper again, and he actually refuses the next fence. Kerr Murray has him round again in a second, and, driving in the rowels, crams him over, just managing to keep the lead; it has, however, roused the dormant devil, and even the iron pull of hands never stirring from the withers, is powerless to stay the rush with which he charges the last obstacle. No fence this to force a way through, but a made up bank with a small quick at the top and deep ditch on the far side; he barely rises to the leap, but breasts it with an impetus that turns him clean over, with his rider underneath.

There is an instantaneous rush, a dozen strong arms drag the horse (whose neck is broken) from the prostrate form, which lies, to all appearance, lifeless on the turf, while Lester, his only real opponent thus disposed of, canters in alone amidst the enthusiastic applause of his fortunate backers. The little sporting doctor, who hasn't missed the Lumleigh Cup for twenty years, is bending over Kerr Murray, and his face is very grave when, at last, he looks up and says, "Not killed this time, but I fear," shaking his head sadly, "I fear the spine is hopelessly injured."

Meanwhile, what of Audrey?

The drags were drawn up with a grand view of the finish, and as Topthorn breasted the bank, Audrey sprang to her feet; but her voice was not heard amongst the sighs and exclamations around her. Cold and still as Kerr Murray himself, save for glowing

eyes fixed on the rigid figure beyond the fence, she stood there watching, utterly unconscious of every one and everything; Lady Margaret speaks to her, but she pays no heed. George, jumping from the roof like a madman, was one of the first to reach the bank; he has realized the state of affairs with his pet cousin pretty clearly, and Dr. Danvers' fiat is barely uttered when he rushes back.

Audrey is still standing, gazing piteously at the ring which surrounds and hides that rigid figure. One hand grasps the rail, and George, standing on the wheel, attracts her attention by laying his upon it. She starts and shudders, the icy look breaks, and in a hoarse hurried whisper she just articulates, "*Dead?*"

"No, no, thank God, not dead," George rejoins.

"Not dead?" she says dreamily; "George, I——," she sinks down, and he thinks she is going to faint, but no—"Help me down," she says; he lifts her to the ground; "Can I go to him?"

"No, darling, no; not now."

"Then take me somewhere, anywhere away from them," she says with a shudder, looking back at the drag where Lady Delamere and the blue serge damsel are comparing notes over the last bad accident they saw.

"Where will they take him?" she asks after a minute.

"Just what I want to see about," says George; "if you will let me take you back I'll go and find out."

"Oh, I will go back, I will go anywhere," she says with piteous eagerness, "but George, dear, *do* take him home."

"I will, darling," he promises rashly enough, but no man looking in that wretched little face could have said otherwise. He fulfils his promise. Chaytor Court is as near the course as any place where he could be properly seen to. So there Kerr Murray is carried. He suffers such intolerable agony that Dr. Danvers' opinion as to the spinal inquiry is considerably modified, and he telegraphs for Houghton Wood, who cannot, however, get down the next day.

The following evening Captain Murray tells George he must see Audrey, "if she will come to me," he says, "and I think she will." It is worse than useless to tell him he ought to keep quiet, it simply irritates him, so George fetches her, saying as he leaves her at the door, "Now be a good child, and don't stay long." She is white as a ghost, and there are dark rings round the large brown eyes. Kerr Murray notes it all as he says, stretching out his hand, "Don't look so sad, my darling."

"I—I can't help it," she whispers with a half sob.

"It is hard luck," he answers, smothering a sigh; "Tophthorn has the best of it; a horse generally has in this sort of thing; he stands at least as good a chance of being shot as of ending his days in a cab; they can't shoot me, so I shall just have to go in a cab for the rest of my days."

"Don't," Audrey breaks in, snatching away her hand, but Captain Murray takes hold of her dress, and continues :

"I didn't send for you to hear grumbles and groans, darling, only I think you know, if it hadn't been for this, I meant to ask you to try me in double harness ; I think I should have gone pretty well between the shafts with you for my leader, but they don't drive tandem in cabs, so I suppose I shall see you trying another team some day, and I want you just to know that—whenever that happens—I—I would wish you what you wished me yesterday."

There is a little break in his voice though he speaks pretty steadily. Audrey's head is turned away, and he can't see the tears streaming down her cheeks ; but when he stops, she turns suddenly, and, throwing herself down by his side, buries her face in his shoulder, and sobs out, "Dick, Dick, *darling*, I *like* cabs when they're not growlers." For a second a gleam like that of yesterday, when he rode off in the preliminary gallop, lights up his face, but it dies down again as he says very gently, "Don't make it harder for me, darling, I almost imagined myself unselfish, and it's so seldom I get within hailing distance of a virtue, you mustn't push me back."

The would-be cheerfulness of this last remark is too much for Audrey, and she sobs unrestrainedly.

Dick strokes her hair and continues, "Dearest, don't grieve so, you are well rid of me. I should probably have kicked the concern to pieces, though I did think I could run straight with you in front. Heaven knows I love you enough."

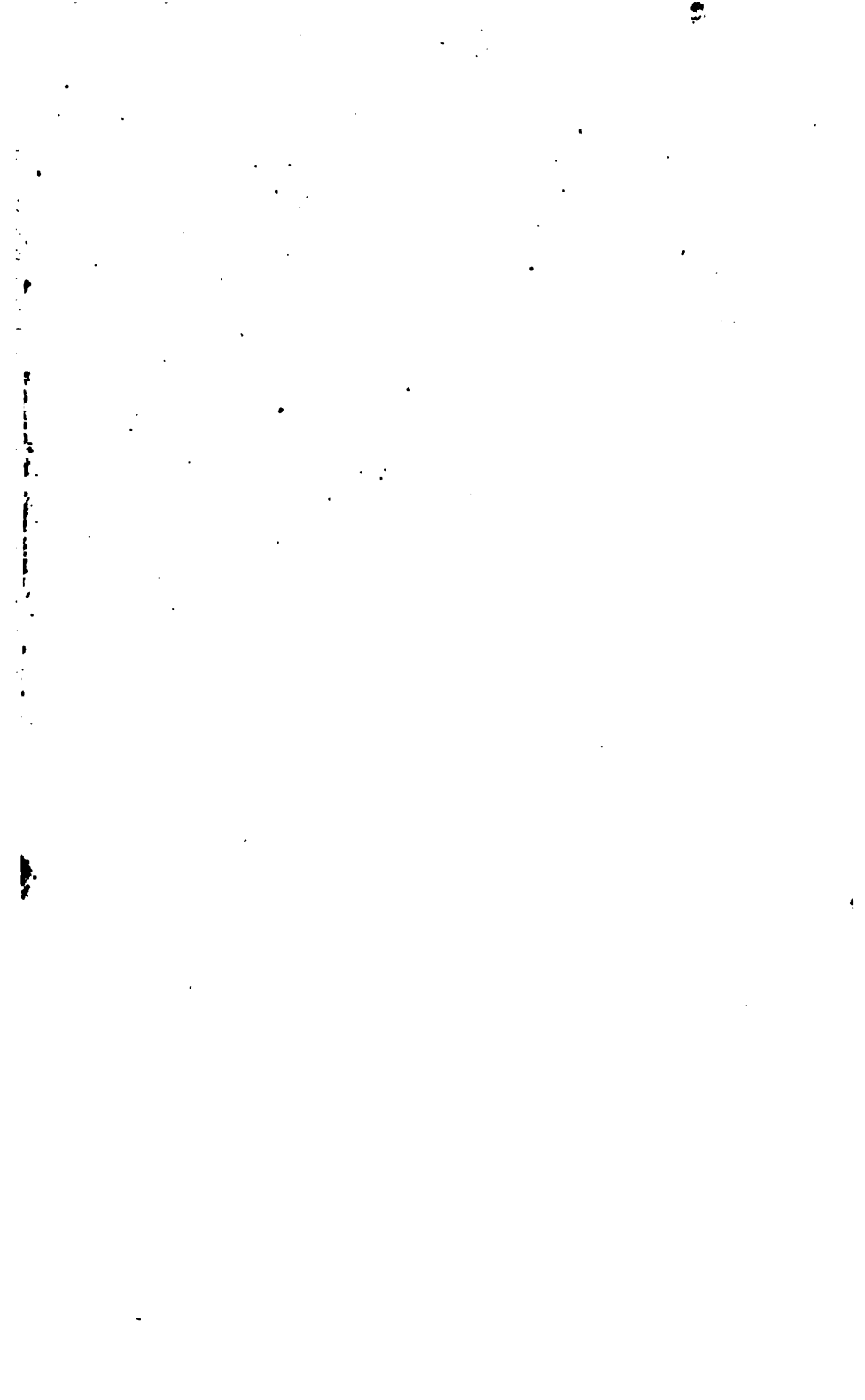
A little wet face is suddenly raised from his shoulder, and a surprisingly firm voice asks, "Are you sure, Dick ?"

He looks straight at her, and answers quietly, "Yes, darling."

"Then I shall marry you," she says decidedly. "I don't believe you'll be a cripple, you *can't* be, and if you are I shall wheel you about in a bath chair."

When Haughton Wood arrives next day he pronounces the spine by no means fatally injured. All the muscles on each side are frightfully torn, but with perfect rest and careful nursing Captain Murray will be able to stand, walk, and, perhaps, even ride again.

Almost as soon as he is allowed to go in a bath chair Dick claims Audrey's rash, but never regretted vow. He is wheeled into church, and his bride taking him "for better, for worse," nurses him so well that a few years later she again sails across country, in the wake of "White Cords."





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